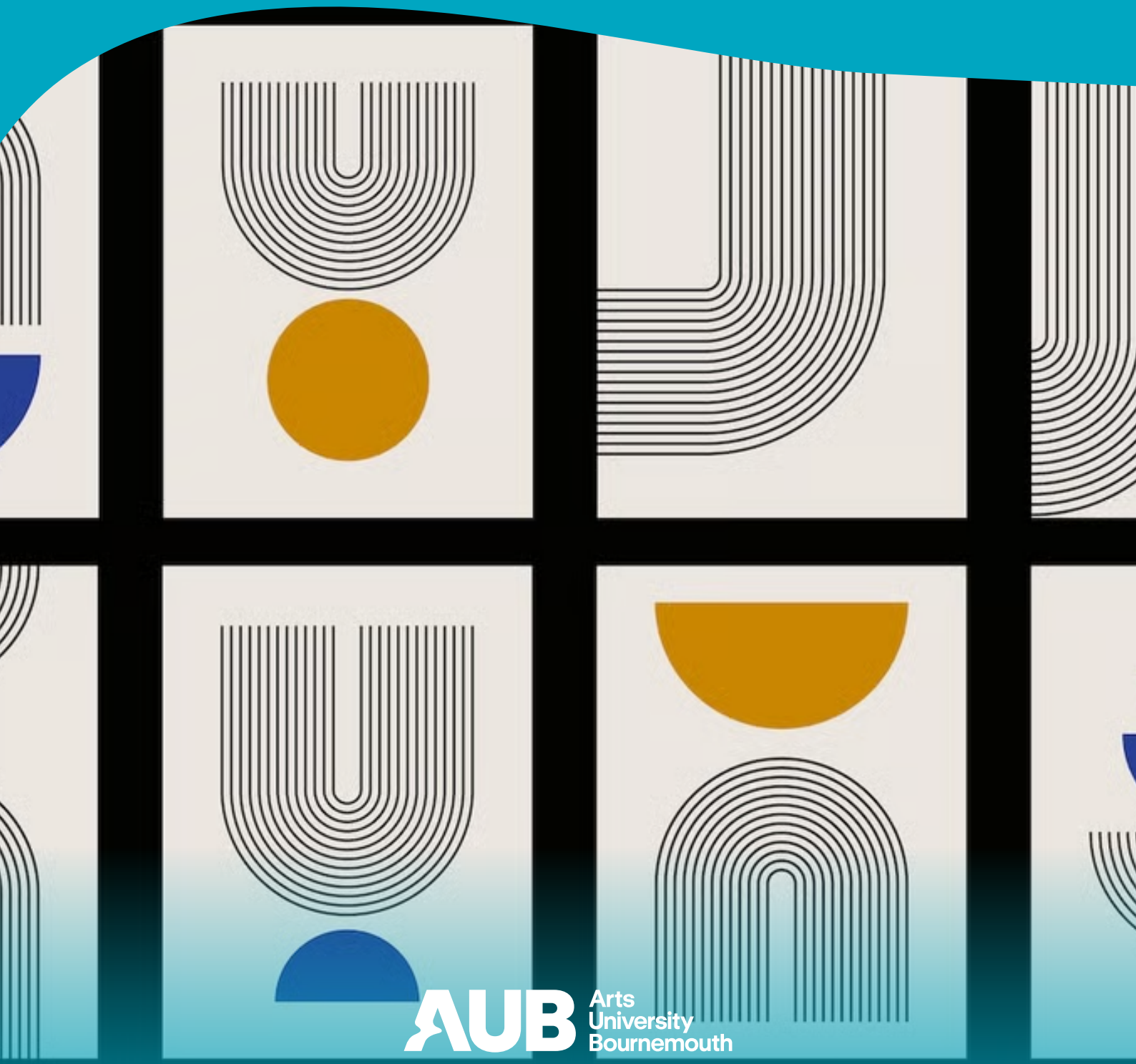
Course Specification

MA
GRAPHIC DESIGN (ONLINE)



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 Course 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 **MA Graphic Design (Online)** 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	Masters of Arts
Course Title	Graphic Design (Online)
Award Title	MA Graphic Design
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	2 years part-time
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 7
Subject benchmark statement	QAA Masters' degree characteristics
Language of study	English
Date of Validation	July 2023
Date of most recent review	Not applicable
Date course specification written/revised	March 2024

Course Description

Historically & politically, great design has promoted cultural trends, tolerance & respect, sustainability issues, ideology, beliefs, propaganda, & national identity. Graphic designers attempt to shape a better life for people & humanise information & technology. This means that graphic design affects culture & its development, social structures, economies & environments worldwide.

The MA Graphic Design online programme will offer a unique opportunity for a new generation of designers, and for existing professionals, who would like to blend research and creative practice with theory and expand their critical thinking, knowledge, and skills to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the user and wider society. This unique course offers a flexible, varied curriculum combining theory and practical elements, aimed at graduates or practising professionals or those wanting to increase their knowledge of the exciting, diverse and growing field of graphic design.

Through discussion and theoretical exploration, linked to evidence-based design solutions, the course allows individuals a collaborative approach, focusing on designing the effective communication of ideas. Graphic designers across the globe, have a responsibility, they need to consider the necessities of people their work impacts, social & cultural trends, or ethics, and when it comes to the materials for these messages, sustainability & environmental effects must be priority. Designing with accessibility in mind is key because there may not be enough digital content available for those with disabilities or impairments. Failing to cater to this portion of the population prevents everyone from accessing the content they could

benefit from or enjoy. Graphic designers could play a pivotal role in increasing inclusivity in society.

In recent years, design has become an international phenomenon affecting an increasing number of countries from the developing world & designers play a significant role in cultural & sustainable development. By working with designers, a nation invests in the growing ability to change & work on innovation & creativity. Informed by a core teaching team and guest speakers, the course unit content will be developed by industry experts and agencies to ensure that this new MA course will continually innovate, engaging students with the concepts and tensions related to the changing landscape of customer experience, versus economics within the commercial industry; therefore, providing, challenging, and promoting new ways of thinking.

The multi-faceted elements of the programme encourage new ways of creative thought, each of the seven core units will look at existing problems and how designers can contribute to the changing needs of users in a creative and experimental way. Starting discussion points such as collaboration, design thinking, human centred design, inclusivity, and will translate into new graphic design solutions for designers to spearhead a future, sustainable existence.

Distinctive features of the course

Interdisciplinary Approach: This course uniquely combines multi-modal creative practice with a systems thinking approach, aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Research Emphasis: Unlike other Graphic Design courses, this programme places significant focus on ethical and environmental aspects of creative-critical practice.

Practicality: Hands-on learning, portfolio creation, and public-facing projects ensure students gain practical, real-world experience.

Professional Development: The course fosters goal setting, project management, and collaboration, preparing or developing 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

The MA Graphic Design fits with the university's strategic vision in several ways:

Innovation: Developing a MA Graphic Design (online) course supports AUB in broadening its scope by offering a unique curriculum which combines creative and critical thinking with industry practice and an ethical, socially engaged ethos. It also allows students to develop valuable entrepreneurial skills, and a pro-active, flexible, resilient mindset that prepares them for starting or developing their own businesses, furthering a career in the graphic design industry, or in other creative careers using the transferable skills and experience gained.

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

Internationalisation: A course in Graphic Design 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.

Course Aims

1. Advance students' prior knowledge in design industry practices with a clear emphasis on producing professionals in graphic design, who are work-ready and engaging at the forefront of practice.

2. Foster a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, informed by a focus on the graphic design industry.

3. Nurture an appropriate understanding of research techniques and advanced scholarship to show broad awareness and deep evaluative understanding of different creative practices, applicable to designing for visual communications.

4. Understand the deployment of advanced research skills that underpin both the identifying and solving of complex design projects specifically focused on enhancing usability in a variety of situations and contexts, and in doing so be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively.

5. Provide students with key skills for employability through input from high-profile industry professionals, making them aware of the attributes and levels of commitment needed to succeed in the sector, to be champions of graphic design and by making connections to build their professional profiles.

6. Produce critically aware and logical thinking professionals that understand existing and emerging forms of new technologies, to innovate and develop sustainable strategies of design in commercial sectors, both domestic and international.

Course Outcomes

1. Produce professionally relevant work at the forefront of Graphic Design practice.

2. Demonstrate a critical awareness of problems and insights and respond to them through Graphic Design practice.

3. Demonstrate and apply highly developed and advanced practical and conceptual understanding of materials, techniques and processes and to raise questions for further study or professional development.

4. Highlight ways in which advanced research skills can be used to enhance usability in varied contexts. Furthermore, to apply these skills to drive the management of complex design projects.

5. Show acquisition of appropriate skills and acumen in communication, presentation and autonomous learning in relation to career aspirations.

6. Demonstrate through innovation an awareness of new technologies, sustainability requirements in a logical and critically aware way.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: Master's degree characteristics

- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- AUB Learning Teaching and Assessment Framework (LTAF)
- AUB Postgraduate Taught Assessment Regulations
- AUB Graduate Attributes

Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies

Lectures
Lectures are pre-recorded videos integrated with the unit content providing acquisition of knowledge around key issues, ideas, and contexts. In addition, each unit may have up to two guest lectures provided by a relevant non-AUB speaker from industry or academia to provide additional insights into the unit topics.

Seminars
These are optional, online, weekly events that provide more opportunities for live discussion and interaction with tutors or fellow students. They are led by the Unit Tutor and provide an opportunity for students to share perspectives and seek guidance or clarity on course content and assessments. Seminars do not take place in the final unit when they are replaced by individual tutorials.

Supervisory Tutorials
These are one to one tutorials that take place in the final unit where students can discuss the development and progress of their projects. They are used to air specific issues raised through the work, provide critical observation, and recommend new directions and research strategies.

Discussion Fora
These are asynchronous spaces where students can post messages, ask questions, and discuss ideas with tutors or fellow students. Learners will be encouraged to engage in critical debate, share ideas or progress on your work with the wider cohort.

Online Learning Resources
These include recorded videos, texts, diagrams, images as well as reading lists and links to other online material. Technical and making skills are demonstrated through a mixture of recorded sessions and explanatory texts.

Assessment

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

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

Students will receive a final mark for each unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on the 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.
You are assessed, broadly speaking in two ways: formatively and summatively.

Formative assessment provides feedback that will help students develop their learning. It should be seen as 'ongoing' assessment in the sense that it enables learners to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and address them appropriately. Formative assessment may take place in tutorials, seminars, critiques, online quizzes and other discussions about the work.

Summative assessment generally takes place at the end of a unit of study. It is an overall evaluation of the acquisition of skills and knowledge developed in that part of the course.

Other assessment methods include *Criterion-referenced assessment* which occurs through use of Learning Outcomes in Unit Assessments, and *Ipsative assessment* where the iterative nature of some aspects of delivery provide opportunities for gauging the student's current level of performance with previous levels of performance. Ipsative assessment is fed-back in individual tutorials.

The work to be assessed generally takes the form of written documents or practical outcomes: assessed reports, digital portfolios, reflective journals, illustrative studies, artefacts and installations, physical and digital models.

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of Master of Arts; however, exit awards are available if a student leaves the course early. If students successfully complete a level of the course, they will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) students must have achieved a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), students must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Master of Arts (MA), a student must have achieved 180 credits, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook. This qualification will be awarded upon successful completion of the course.

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.

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 the course, both curricular and extra-curricular activities will give students the opportunities to prepare for their 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 the course and consider the following stages: Self Awareness, Opportunities, 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 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. 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.

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

The course content includes an introduction unit, seven key course units and a final major project unit which includes research methods.

Contextual/Reflective Journal

The Contextual/reflective Journal is introduced within each introductory unit, it is not part of the assessment but will be an important part of reflection and knowledge engagement throughout all units within the course. It is an illustrated, written submission that documents practice through evidencing a wide range of attributes including academic engagement, reflective critical evaluation (of your own practice), critical analysis (through practice and literature reviews), processual thinking, technical and specialist skills, and professionalism.

The Contextual/Reflective Journal provides a space for students to map their evaluation and application of design and research methods. Projects might potentially use one or more research methods selected from a wealth of methods that have emerged in design literature. These methods provide ways of obtaining data, of analysing it and of testing conclusions. Methodology involves the study of methods, and students will begin to identify the

assumptions that underlie different methods and to develop the skills necessary to coordinate them and to synchronise them with the chosen theoretical framework.

The Journal highlights a student's insights in three important areas:

- The **context** that informed the practice: the relevant: theories, subjects, issues, political perspectives, designers, artists, images, literature and so forth.

- The **research** that is 'on', 'for', or 'in' the practice – this includes: research on the ways the practice/the outcomes of individual practice; your own research was undertaken to enable the practice; and research that is embedded in the practice.

- The **developmental** aspect of the project: both in terms of a student's own personal development as a creative practitioner, and the processual development of an emerging body of work.

Executive summary

The executive summary will be a limited word count summarising the outcomes of the Contextual/Reflective Journal.

Key activities developed within the course:

During the MA degree, students will be guided through the following activities:

1. Collaborative on-line research skills.
2. Essay writing to academic standards.
3. Digital portfolio making, artefact, installation production skills.
4. Presentation and communication skills including reflective journal and evidence-based design development skills.
5. Material specification for sustainability and project management skills.
6. Entrepreneurial skills through creative original design production.
7. Creative explorative outcomes will be investigated to answer current research gap needs in both practical and theoretical units.

MA Graphic Design

The course has been designed to not only give an excellent student experience, it has also been designed to be a unique course that addresses current global issues. The units have been specifically designed to create discussion and research starting points around these issues and to encourage debate that can be addressed and resolved through design solutions. The catalysts of discussion are likely to be (but not limited to):

1. The current sustainable agenda and global crisis avoidance, how designers can contribute to the UK's and UN's sustainable goals.
2. Design thinking, using research, critical thinking, and strategy to ensure the relevant delivery of design that creates impact.
3. Human-centred design, a problem-solving technique that puts real people at the centre of the development process, focusing on people's thinking, emotions, and behaviour, it enables students to both identify and solve design problems that resonate and are tailored to the audience's needs.
4. Predicting human behaviour, using cognitive science and evidence-based design as key tools in predicting consumer behaviour. It is now possible to get AI (Artificial Intelligence) predictions on design from social media ads through web design, to product packaging, to see if creative campaigns resonate with audiences and deliver the best results before launching.

5. Inclusivity in design, investigating a design process that embraces human diversity and considers diverse groups of people and their needs. These practices enable products or services to be usable by as many people as reasonably possible, regardless of age, ability, socio economic background, etc.

These discussion points and research gaps have been translated into units that will provide a direction for research opportunities for students.

Specialist resources:

Students receive access to Adobe Creative Cloud as part of their registration
They receive access to AUB Library e-books and resources

Course Units

Stage 1: Introduction

GDD700 Defining Your Purpose as a Designer (15 credits)

Stage 2: Carousel Units

GDD701 Design thinking (15 credits)
GDD702 Collaboration in Practice: Brand Sensory Experience (15 credits)
GDD703 Innovate – Human Centred Design (15 credits)
GDD704 Graphic Design, Psychology and Cognition (15 credits)
GDD705 Inclusivity in Design (15 credits)
GDD706 Behaviour Change using Visual Communication (15 credits)
GDD707 Sustainable futures (15 credits)

Stage 3: Final Project

GDD708 Research Proposal (15 credits)
GDD709 Research Project (45 credits)

Course Model

The workload is balanced across a number of consecutive units which all run independently. There are three stages of study and two progression points in the course where students move from the introductory unit to the seven carousel units, and from the carousel stage to the final two project units. There is no progression within the carousel units which are designed to be taken in any order as determined by the students' intake time of year. All units are a core part of the course and there are no options to select or deselect units.

