

the
GRADUATE
SCHOOL

MA Graphic Design
Programme Specification

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

The Programme Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **BA (Hons) Graphic Design** 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 this Handbook.

<u>Key Course Information</u>	
Final Award	BA (Hons)
Course Title	Graphic Design
Award Titles	BA (Hons) Graphic Design
Teaching institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Offered in the School of:	Arts and Communication
Professional accreditation	Creative Skillset
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	W210
Language of study	English
External Examiner for course:	Dr Cathy Gale Kingston University
<i>Please note that it is not appropriate for students to contact external examiners directly.</i>	
Date of Validation	1996
Date of most recent review	2018
Date programme specification written/revised	September 2022

Course Description

The course is designed to provide a dynamic, student-centred, broad-based graphic design learning experience that incorporates both academic understanding and relevance to the creative industries. Graphic design is approached as a way to design acts of communication, using a diverse mix of skills, knowledge and resources. The intention is to reduce complexity to *human scale*, achieving *impact* (the ability to gain attention), and *relevance* (the ability to link new forms and meanings to existing knowledge).

The course encourages you to question how meanings are made by users and

audiences from the range of material and conceptual resources associated with graphic artefacts, recognising that there are social, cognitive and embodied processes involved in graphic communication. These material and conceptual resources are continually changing together with the tools used in making and disseminating graphic products. Consequently, new technologies are approached as opportunities for re-evaluating, and re-interpreting existing methods and technologies as much as for providing new areas for exploration.

This shift in communications infrastructure is an important factor, for instance, in how 'Open Design' has provided user-centred and user-driven outcomes that challenge the traditional designer-manufacturer-distributor-consumer pattern. Our task therefore, is to develop new ways of thinking in wider, more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary modes based upon these communities of practice.

The course has developed a focus on problem finding and problem solving in ways consistent with a sense of technological, ecological, social and cultural responsibility. It encourages reflection on practice through an iterative approach based on research, analysis, synthesis, and the generation of alternative visual ideas. An ability to scope a situation to identify prevailing and potential: technologies, histories, strategies, attitudes, understandings, structures, motivations and interests is therefore essential. Such contextual study is viewed on the course as a part of design practice, as are the theories that guide and underpin design strategies and decision making.

We aim to continue to produce confident, enquiring graduates who are able to undertake further study, or pursue careers in fields related or loosely related to graphic design practice.

Course Aims

The course aims to:

1. Communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions to a wide range of users and audiences; and to develop qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision making in complex and unpredictable contexts; and the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate training of a professional nature or postgraduate study.
2. Develop knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with study, professional practice and research and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of graphic design;
3. Develop your knowledge and understanding to critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete); to formulate judgements and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem;
4. Develop your abilities to manage your own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the study of Graphic Design).

Course Outcomes

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

1. Evidence comprehensive, practical and theoretical knowledge and understanding of graphic design within relevant contexts.
2. Identify defined aspects of the discipline and specialise within the field of graphic design.
3. Work independently and apply knowledge, skills and understanding appropriately.
4. Self and peer appraise to manage and reflect on learning.
5. Evidence critical and analytical understanding and awareness through practical and theoretical work.
6. Evidence an effective approach to: scoping, problem-finding, problem-solving, opportunity spotting, ideation, research, communication and presentation skills.
7. Successfully realise visual, creative and aesthetic solutions.
8. Be confident, informed and proactive.
9. Strategically pursue career opportunities and post graduate study.

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

Learning is realised through taught sessions and independent study. The course is structured progressively and embraces a wide variety of learning and teaching methods and experiences to promote active learning. These include project-based learning, workshops, team learning, lectures, seminars, group critiques, educational visits, guided reading and tutorials.

You will develop skills, which include research, critical analysis, problem solving, communication and presentation as well as specialist technical skills. Throughout, the integration of theory and practice is promoted and reinforced rigorously. The learning experiences prepare you for a variety of employment routes and postgraduate study.

You will be encouraged to experiment, take risks, and try out new things. The moment when new found skills and knowledge are connected to your existing skillset and understanding is seen as an opportunity for insight, creativity and learning.

Projects involve phases of problem finding, problem solving, and spotting opportunities for innovation.

A team of staff that include professional Graphic Designers, researchers and relevant visiting practitioners delivers the course. The course is outward facing and works closely with design agencies and other organisations at local, national and international levels.

Midway through the larger 40 credit units Formative Assessment will take place to help you keep on track, monitor your progress and support your achievement.

You will take part in major graphic design competitions, for example at Level 6, the International Society of Typographic Designers Licentiate scheme that gives you the opportunity to attain a specialist professional qualification and the Royal Society of Arts Student Design Awards as well as the Design and Art Direction student awards competition offer opportunities to participate in industry-based briefs.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Core Values and Skills

In developing courses, the University wanted to create a curriculum that reflected its values and ethos. It should prepare you for the future not only in enabling you to have a successful career, but we also want to empower you with the knowledge, skills and passion to have a positive impact on the world and be an agent for change. We have 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.

Equalities 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.

Course Content

The course is structured around eight strands based on attributes that you will be encouraged to develop. The attributes are abilities or skills that you will demonstrate through your practice. The strands are categories of attributes. These strands develop and build from unit to unit. The total attributes you have acquired at any point provides you with a profile of attributes that reflect your readiness for employment and entrepreneurship and/or your readiness to undertake further study.

The strands are:

Making skills

Analytical and research skills

Conceptual skills

Visualisation skills

Argumentation and communication skills

Social/networking/authorial skills

Subject specific theories and knowledge

Contextual theories and knowledge

Level 4

Level 4 provides you with opportunities to develop fundamental skills, principles, processes and knowledge. These are what we consider to be core attributes; the kind of things that all graphic designers might be expected to do, or to know.

All Level 4 units are designed to provide you with experience in the studio and IT areas and to promote confidence in using technical processes, methods and materials necessary to the study of graphic design. A working knowledge of typography is also an aspiration for this year enabling you to structure and arrange information in ways that will enhance communication and expression. Study at this level provides a broader contextual understanding of the subject. Theory and practice are seamlessly integrated in all units. Skills in research, critical analysis and evaluation, communication of inter-related practices and technologies, are delivered to enhance the student's creative potential.

The year builds from open-ended projects intended to facilitate questioning about the nature of graphic design. The two units *Exploring Graphic Communication* and *Visual Thinking* do not attempt to apply design thinking to 'real world' problems. Rather, they will help you to develop a visual language and to find ways to research, experiment and generate ideas. The final unit in the year, *Graphic Design Studies* acts as a bridge to Level 5. Here you will be expected to use your design skills to respond to wider contextual issues, and to deliver designed solutions that could lead to broader desired outcomes, whether social, cultural or economic. The importance of team

working is also recognised in this unit which includes an element of peer assessment.

At the end of the year in the two-week period when work is being assessed there are opportunities for cross year activities and collaborations, which might involve competition work, critiques, and portfolio reviews.

If appropriate during this period an international educational visit may be organised.

Level 5

During this level you are required to relate creative aims to critical and contextual frameworks. You will identify different perspectives, specialisms and ways of thinking, within graphic design.

Three units in this year encourage you to engage with your subject from different viewpoints. In *Visual Systems* you will explore the ways in which systematic thinking informs practice, through typographic systems, the exploration of such things as wayfinding systems, and the systematic nature of design processes. In *Narrative, Sequence and Interaction* the focus is on the importance of storytelling, primarily through digital media. And in *Innovate*, you will be introduced to the user-centred agenda preparing you for Level 6 study and units such as *Specialist Practice*.

In this way, the Level 5 experience provides a way of scoping different understandings, skills, and methods of working that can inform your thinking in relation to the more self-directed practice, and project-based learning occurring at Level 6.

Theoretical and contextual understanding is broadened and deepened in a variety of ways in Level 5. Ethical and sustainability issues are addressed in units such as *Innovate*, where talks and lectures integrate with the University's AUB Human initiative. The unit *Defining and Refining Themes and Issues* provides opportunities to survey, and then focus on, particular themes and issues that might go on to become the subject of the *Investigate Study* in Level 6. This provides another way in which you can identify a focus for your study at Level 6. Finally, there are considerable opportunities to connect with potential employers, and the world of work, at Level 5. You will be encouraged to make contact with graphic design agencies and consultancies in a number of ways.

In Level 5 there is also the opportunity to take part in an Erasmus exchange where you will study abroad in a partner institution. This involves negotiating a programme of study that approximates the unit/s that you would have been taking at the AUB. The exchange typically occurs in the first term of Level 5 however there is some flexibility as it is necessary to synchronise your study with the timetables of both the courses concerned.

Level 6

Level 6 encourages you to extend the scope and depth of enquiry and to confirm your particular creative aspirations, developing a strategic approach that focuses your practice toward particular destinations.

The *Major Project* unit provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate the maturity of your creativity, intellectual enquiry and expressive abilities.

Likewise, the *Investigative Study* unit affords opportunities to pursue a programme of advanced independent research, consider links with the *Major Project*, or demonstrate that the level of skills in research; analysis, criticism and communication are appropriate for entry to employment or postgraduate study. As well as communicating through academic writing, you will also be expected to use your writing skills to organise your ideas, for messaging, specification, copywriting and pitching ideas.

In *Specialist Practice* and *Major Project* you will be given the opportunity to refine your practice, through a *deep dive* approach to design. Here, primary research and experimentation are used to develop insights that spark creative solutions to problems that you will have identified. The learning in these units tends to be *project based*; that is, it emerges from the challenges and particularities of the project concerned. All the units at Level 6 therefore, require you to define your study through Learning Agreements, which you negotiate with the teaching team. These provide a focus to enable you to demonstrate the integration of your learning on the course.

At this level, typographic knowledge and skills can inform experimentation, providing opportunities to realise original creative outcomes that can be applied to communicative goals.

The outward facing nature of the course becomes even more noticeable at Level 6 with the engagement with competition briefs and with the input from visiting speakers. You may also take part in a live brief, or be set 'ignite' projects by outside designers. These projects work inside existing set briefs, providing a springboard for ideation or evaluation.

Course Units

Level 4

GDS487	Exploring Graphic Communication	40 credits
GDS488	Visual Thinking	40 credits
GDS489	Graphic Design Studies	40 credits

Level 5

GDS561	Visual Systems	40 credits
GDS562	Narrative, Sequence and Interaction	40 credits
GDS564	Defining and Refining Themes and Issues	20 credits
GDS563	Innovate	20 credits

Level 6

GDS661	Specialist Practice	40 credits
GDS663	Investigative Study	20 credits
GDS662	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 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
Induction week	Autumn Term										Spring Term										Summer Term									
	GDS487 Exploring Graphic Communication Weeks 1-10 (40 credits)										GDS488 Visual Thinking Weeks 11-20 (40 credits)										GDS489 Graphic Design Studies Weeks 21-30 (40 credits)									

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									
	GDS561 Visual Systems (weeks 1-9) (40 credits)										GDS562 Narrative, Sequence and Interaction (weeks 10-19) (40 credits)										GDS563 Innovate (weeks 20-30) (20 credits)									
																				GDS564 Defining and Refining Themes and Issues (weeks 18-30) (20 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								
GDS661 Specialist Practice (weeks 1-12) (40 credits)											GDS662 Major Project (weeks 13-30) (60 credits)											Assessment								
											GDS663 Investigative Study (weeks 11-20) (20 credits)																			