

Programme Specification

Communication Design (2021-22)

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Awarding Institution	University of Southampton
Teaching Institution	University of Southampton
Mode of Study	Full-time
Duration in years	1
Accreditation details	None
Final award	Master of Arts (MA)
Name of award	Communication Design
Interim Exit awards	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma
FHEQ level of final award	Level 7
UCAS code	N/A
Programme code	7818
QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference	Art And Design 2008
Programme Lead	Danny Aldred

Programme Overview

Brief outline of the programme

MA Communication Design at Winchester School of Art allows students to explore and re-define their practice through various media formats of experimental publishing and interaction design. Research-driven, with a strong emphasis on experimentation and critical making, students are encouraged to explore the many 'systems' for communicating text and image. The core curriculum is practice based and underpinned by workshops, lectures and both individual and group tutorials.

Students gain knowledge and skills principally through practice-led research and produce effective information and interface designs. The course prepares students for work in a rapidly changing sector, or further academic study, by equipping them with practical skills and a critical understanding of new technologies and their wider societal implications and contexts.

The programme is led by educators with industry experience and published research within the fields of graphic design and design education. Industry informed projects and talks with leading design studios feed the curriculum and ensure an intense and rewarding year of study.

Your contact hours will vary depending on your module/option choices. Full information about contact hours is provided in individual module profiles.

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Learning and teaching

The Faculty promotes a student-centred approach and this programme uses teaching and learning strategies that will support you to develop into expert post-graduate level design professionals.

Teaching and learning methods are principally practice-led, this means that a student's learning is mainly driven by weekly practical workshops that promote hand-on engagement with the tools, methods and skills required for design development and research. These sessions are supported by tutorials, lectures, "crits" (presentations), facilitated discussions, guest lectures and self-directed study. These methods are designed to teach students how to define a problem space, prototype and test solutions, whilst also developing their critical thinking, encouraging an integration of practice with theory and an understanding of the contexts that design operates within. Along with an emphasis on collaboration, multi-disciplinary approaches and reflective learning students gain wealth of transferable skills that they can draw upon. An overview of the learning relationship between you and the University is provided in the University of Southampton Student Charter. The Faculty and School of Art is committed to supporting you to enable you to fulfil your academic and personal potential. We will work with you to facilitate your learning, within a multi-cultural context underpinned by mutual respect.

Assessment

Throughout the programme you will be involved in learning through assessment. Assessment tasks will be formative and summative: formative assessment is not marked and is designed to enable you to gain from self-evaluation, peer and academic verbal and written feedback, in order to improve your work for the summative assessment.

The summative assessment includes a range of assignments used to enable you to demonstrate the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Assessment is designed to help you demonstrate your knowledge, critical understanding and application of essential concepts of your practical discipline. Within the programme modules, the approach to assessment is designed to enable you to integrate theory and practice, maximise your skills of critical thinking and analysis, and develop your understanding of design practice in relation to your profession.

Special Features of the programme

Studio space, workshops, guest lectures, creative services centre, access to specialist equipment, study visits.

Please note: As a research-led University, we undertake a continuous review of our programmes to ensure quality enhancement and to manage our resources. As a result, this programme may be revised during a student's period of registration; however, any revision will be balanced against the requirement that the student should receive the educational service expected. Please read our [Disclaimer](#) to see why, when and how changes may be made to a student's programme.

Programmes and major changes to programmes are approved through the University's [programme validation process](#) which is described in the University's [Quality handbook](#).

Educational Aims of the Programme

The aims of the programme are to: The aims of the programme are:

- To promote originality, insight and critical reflective abilities
- To apply a range of techniques and research methods to your specialist field

- To behave ethically and with integrity and a strong sense of social responsibility
- To develop a range of professional skills relevant to the creative industries including the use of digital tools
- To take responsibility for independent learning and continuing professional development
- To enable an international perspective with a critical awareness of current issues and developments in your subject and profession

Programme Learning Outcomes

Having successfully completed this programme you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

Knowledge and Understanding

On successful completion of this programme you will have knowledge and understanding of:

- A1. current theories and practices arising from your in-depth research and enquiry
- A2. critical and reflective approaches to your own work in response to set and /or self-initiated briefs
- A3. systematic insight into design practices and professional practices relevant to the creative economy
- A4. the contemporary context and culture of communication design and the creative industries
- A5. ethical and sustainability debates relevant to communication design issues and employability
- A6. a range of contemporary contexts relevant to design within the global creative industries and informed by leading research

Teaching and Learning Methods

The programme employs a variety of learning and teaching methods designed to recognise different learning styles and support you in developing and achieving the learning outcomes. Engagement with academic staff, guest speakers and discipline related opportunities will enhance the currency of the programme content and help establish in-depth knowledge of your practice, with particular reference to professional skills.

You will be expected to take an active role in your learning and one of the many benefits of this approach is that it enables you to reflect on the continuum of knowledge acquisition whilst enabling you to apply this within your context. You will be expected to be reflective and self-aware of your learning needs and those of others who may have different perspectives and backgrounds. You will develop your knowledge and understanding through staff -led teaching and independent learning time.

Teaching methods will include:

- Lectures
- practical and technical workshops
- research skills inductions
- tutor-led seminars
- student-led seminars
- tutorials
- case study analysis
- visiting Lecturers

Learning methods, that include independent learning during non-contact time, will include:

- reflection on verbal or written feedback: this may be verbal or written offered during seminars, tutorials, group activities
- evaluation of feedback: this may take the form of reflective formative tasks

- group and collaborative projects and tasks
- optional study visits
- independent research and investigation
- online reference material research
- peer group learning and peer assessment tasks
- problem-solving activities
- class discussion/critiques
- student presentations

Postgraduate Certificate learning outcomes

Having successfully completed the PG Certificate you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- An overview of the current theories and practices arising from your in-depth research and enquiry
- An outline appreciation of the critical and reflective approaches to your own work in response to set and /or self-initiated briefs
- An understanding of systematic insight of processes relevant to professional practice
- An appreciation of the contemporary debates in the creative industries and how they inform your practice
- An overview of ethical and sustainability debates relevant to professional practice and employability
- An overview of a range of contemporary contexts relevant to design in the global creative industries

You should be aware that as the PG Certificate is based on the attainment of credit rather than on passing specific modules and you will be able to demonstrate the specific learning outcomes relating to the modules which you have passed.

Postgraduate Diploma learning outcomes

Having successfully completed the PG Diploma you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- A more comprehensive overview of the current theories and practices arising from your in-depth research and enquiry
- A more detailed appreciation of the critical and reflective approaches to your own work in response to set and /or self-initiated briefs
- A more detailed understanding of systematic insight of processes relevant to professional practice
- A more in depth appreciation of the contemporary debates in the creative industries and how they inform your practice
- A more comprehensive overview of ethical and sustainability debates relevant to professional practice and employability
- A more comprehensive overview of a range of contemporary contexts relevant to design in the global creative industries

You should be aware that as the PG Diploma is based on the attainment of credit rather than on passing specific modules and you will have been able to demonstrate the specific learning outcomes relating to the modules which you have passed.

Assessment Methods

The programme will employ a range of assessment and feedback approaches to ensure that the assessment strategy is progressive in complexity and enables you to achieve the learning outcomes whilst enhancing your learning experiences.

Formative (not-marked) assessment will be undertaken at key stages within the taught Semesters 1 and 2, in order to provide you with the ability to evaluate your learning and address any identified issues in advance of your summative (marked) assessment.

Ongoing feedback will be provided from your academic tutor, module lead and peers.

Summative assessment of your knowledge and understanding will be undertaken through formal assessment of work. The assignments are designed to develop and test your growing knowledge and understanding of the subject area.

Formative and Summative assessment methods to test knowledge and understanding for the programme will include:

- oral presentations (group and individual)
- written assignments (essays, reports)
- Digital and visual assignments.
- exhibitions

Subject Specific Intellectual and Research Skills

On successful completion of this programme you will be able to:

- B1. think in a critically reflective and creative manner
- B2. engage in advanced research and critical analysis and the informed application of theoretical studies applicable to your practice
- B3. explore advanced individual creativity, vision and personal expression to develop your practice
- B4. analyse and solve creative and complex problems
- B5. recognise your own academic strengths and weaknesses, reflecting on your performance and progress and be able to respond to feedback
- B6. apply critical judgement to advance your research and intellectual skills

Teaching and Learning Methods

Similarly to your knowledge and understanding skills, you will be provided with resources to enable you to further develop your knowledge base encouraging Masters level thinking with the possibility of progressing to doctoral level after completing this programme. The teaching and learning strategies are the same as above with a focus on a variety of face-to-face contact and online learning and teaching methods

The programme employs a variety of learning and teaching methods designed to recognise different learning styles and support you in developing and achieving critical, reflective and research learning outcomes appropriate to Masters' level. You will be expected to develop an increasingly self-aware approach to learning, managing your learning progress. Teaching and learning strategies that will enable you to demonstrate application of critical, reflective and analytical thinking will include:

- lectures
- academic study skills sessions
- tutor-led seminars
- tutorials
- case study analysis
- visiting Lecturers
- Independent learning, including reflection and evaluation of feedback
- group projects and formative collaborative tasks
- study visits
- independent research
- online reference material and tutorial notes
- peer group learning
- class discussions

Assessment Methods

Formative (not-marked) assessment will be undertaken at key stages within the taught Semesters 1 and 2, in order to provide you with the ability to evaluate your learning and address any identified issues in advance of your summative (marked) assessment.

Ongoing feedback will be provided from your academic tutor, module lead and peers.

Summative assessment of your intellectual and research skills will be undertaken through formal assessment of work. The assignments are designed to develop and test your growing ability to research, reflect and critically examine topics appropriate to your subject area.

Formative and Summative assessment methods to test knowledge and understanding for the programme may include:

- Practical projects / tasks
- Vivas
- Crits (Presentations)
- Reflective writing
- Reports
- Blog Posts

Transferable and Generic Skills

On successful completion of this programme you will be able to:

- C1. take responsibility for your own learning development and academic integrity
- C2. demonstrate ability to work effectively individually and in a team role, solving problems in innovative and creative ways
- C3. demonstrate awareness of ethical considerations
- C4. communicate effectively using a range of media (for example orally, in writing and through digital media)
- C5. manage your time and resources as an independent learner
- C6. evidence the ability to successfully manage and complete an independent project

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching and learning activities are embedded within all of the taught modules to enable you to develop your transferable skills. You will develop transferable communication skills using a variety of media, together with the ability to apply an understanding of ethical frameworks to your work. This will be facilitated through academic study and professional skills sessions, tutor-led and student-led seminars and collaborative projects.

Engagement in individual and group work will promote your ability to take responsibility for your own work and

critically reflect on it in a manner that promotes self-awareness and personal development. This will also provide an opportunity for you to work in unfamiliar contexts within a group or team. The Final Project module will provide you with further opportunities to practice working effectively and independently with limited supervision and to exercise your time management skills.

Assessment Methods

The methods of assessment are the same as the previous two sections with ongoing feedback provided from your academic tutor, module lead and peers.

The assessment methods are designed to enable you to demonstrate achievement of the transferable and generic skills learning outcomes, which will include your ability to communicate effectively your ideas and concepts, across a wide range of media, appropriate to your academic and professional context. Time management will be assessed through research proposals, where you will be required to plan your final project as an independent learner.

Subject Specific Practical Skills

On successful completion of this programme you will be able to:

- D1. Examine and interpret varied research materials and engage in methodologies specific to communication and interaction design to inform outcomes.
- D2. Produce experimental design proposals, prototypes and structure information visually to achieve complex communication objectives.
- D3. Understand and apply design theory and use cultural, ethical and technological knowledge to shape effective information and interface designs.

Teaching and Learning Methods

In developing subject specific knowledge in your chosen discipline, you will be supported by highly experienced academics who, as experts in the field, will facilitate you as designers to understand the knowledge and skills required to confidently lead and work in the creative industries. This will include developing your ability to practice as an independent professional able to contribute to developments in your subject and profession.

Assessment Methods

As above, the assessment methods will include formative and summative assignments, to evidence your evidencing your advanced level knowledge and experience of Communication Design. Ongoing feedback will be provided from your academic tutor, module lead and peers.

Programme Structure

The programme structure table is below:

Information about pre and co-requisites is included in individual module profiles.

Where optional modules have been specified, the following is an indicative list of available optional modules, which are subject to change each academic year. Please note in some instances modules have limited spaces available.

Part I

The programme consists of core, compulsory and optional modules. (For definitions see: <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/credit-bearing-progs.html>)

Taught modules are delivered in Semesters 1 and 2, while the Final Project module is a student-led independent project carried out over the summer period.

The core modules provide in depth knowledge relevant to the specialist concepts and methods of Communication Design. The compulsory modules consider a broad range of subject specific and employability related topics. You will use practice-led research to develop an understanding of human centred design and other design theories, tools and practices relevant for design work and/or research with networked digital media. You will be encouraged to critically explore contemporary topics associated with the design industries and digital technologies, including principles of “new” media, interaction design, user experience design, user interface design, data visualisation, remix cultures and post-digital print. Additionally you will engage in academic skills related to conducting desk research, synthesizing and analysing data and writing up your work in accordance with academic expectations appropriate to this level of study. These academic skills are taught alongside general professional skills, whilst a separate ‘Contextual Studies’ module will provide you with a applied understanding and knowledge of issues more specifically linked to Communication Design. The Option module in Semester 2 provides you with an opportunity to further enhance the career-orientation of your studies and tailor your programme towards your professional aspirations.

You will be able to apply the knowledge and skills you develop on the programme through a Final Project, giving you an opportunity to develop an area of personal expertise.

Typical course content

You will use practice-led research to develop an understanding of human centred design and other design theories, tools and practices relevant for design work and/or research with networked digital media. Central to this objective is studio-based learning and teaching, which is driven by practical briefs, workshops and group activities conducted in a dedicated studio space. This hands-on approach to your studies is underpinned by lectures and written tasks, which provide you with an opportunity to discuss theory, debate contextual material and reflect on your work. Study visits and industry informed projects ensure that your work is in dialogue with the key issues and debates shaping the profession.

The programme culminates with the Final Project module in which you develop a practice-led research project around a research question or clearly defined communications problem. This provides an opportunity to critically engage with a key contemporary issue within the discipline and independently build on your existing skills in design and media production. The outputs of this research project will form the centre-piece of your professional portfolio and will be included in a student-led graduate event.

Indicative content:

- Experimental publishing
- Human centred design
- Interaction design
- User interface design
- Design research / Practice led-research
- Critical Speculative Design
- Participatory Cultures
- Data Visualisation
- Exploring typography and image making

Information about pre and co-requisites is included in individual module profiles.

Part I Compulsory (must take)

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
ARTD6112	Professional and Academic Skills (Practice)	10	Compulsory

Part I Core (must take and pass)

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
ARTD6115	Design and New Media	20	Core
ARTD6116	Design Laboratory	20	Core
ARTD6117	Final Project (Communication Design)	30	Core

Part I Optional

You should choose option modules totalling 10 ECTS/20 CATS in Semester 2. All option modules are offered subject to availability and timetabling constraints.

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
ARTD6152	Creative Thinking and Problem Solving	10	Optional
ARTD6153	Digital Cultures	10	Optional
ARTD6154	Entrepreneurship	10	Optional
ARTD6155	Experimental Publishing	10	Optional
ARTD6156	Exploring the Visual Language of Display	10	Optional
ARTD6157	Global Marketing	10	Optional

ARTD6151	Sustainability in Business and Design	10	Optional
ARTD6158	Visual Culture	10	Optional

Progression Requirements

The programme follows the University's regulations for [*Progression, Determination and Classification of Results : Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Programmes*](#) and [*Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Postgraduate Master's Programmes*](#) Any exemptions or variations to the University regulations, approved by AQSC are located in [*section VI of the University Calendar*](#).

Support for student learning

There are facilities and services to support your learning some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more particularly to students in your particular Faculty or discipline area.

The University provides:

- library resources, including e-books, on-line journals and databases, which are comprehensive and up-to-date; together with assistance from Library staff to enable you to make the best use of these resources
- high speed access to online electronic learning resources on the Internet from dedicated PC Workstations onsite and from your own devices; laptops, smartphones and tablet PCs via the Eduroam wireless network. There is a wide range of application software available from the Student Public Workstations.
- computer accounts which will connect you to a number of learning technologies for example, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (which facilitates online learning and access to specific learning resources)
- standard ICT tools such as Email, secure filestore and calendars.
- access to key information through the MySouthampton Student Mobile Portal which delivers timetables, Module information, Locations, Tutor details, Library account, bus timetables etc. while you are on the move.
- IT support through a comprehensive website, telephone and online ticketed support and a dedicated helpdesk in the Hartley Library.
- Enabling Services offering support services and resources via a triage model to access crisis management, mental health support and counselling. Support includes daily Drop In at Highfield campus at 13.00 – 15.00 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday out of term-time) or via on-line chat on weekdays from 14.00 – 16.00. Arrangements can also be made for meetings via Skype.
- assessment and support (including specialist IT support) facilities if you have a disability, long term health problem or Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia).
- the Student Services Centre (SSC) to assist you with a range of general enquiries including financial matters, accommodation, exams, graduation, student visas, ID cards
- Career and Employability services, advising on job search, applications, interviews, paid work, volunteering and internship opportunities and getting the most out of your extra-curricular activities alongside your degree programme when writing your CV
- Other support that includes health services (GPs), chaplaincy (for all faiths) and 'out of hours' support for students in Halls and in the local community, (18.00-08.00)
- A Centre for Language Study, providing assistance in the development of English language and study skills for non-native speakers.

The Students' Union provides

- an academic student representation system, consisting of Course Representatives, Academic Presidents, Faculty Officers and the Vice-President Education; SUSU provides training and support for all these representatives, whose role is to represent students' views to the University.
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and volunteering
- an Advice Centre offering free and confidential advice including support if you need to make an academic appeal
- Support for student peer-to-peer groups, such as Nightline.

Associated with your programme you will be able to access:

- Studio space
- A Personal Academic tutor or Senior Tutor
- Programme handbooks
- Module support material (increasingly in electronic form).
- Core research skills module at the start of your programme
- Blackboard
- Inductions

- Technical demonstrations as required
- Specialist workshop activity support as required
- Module and Project briefings
- The Gallery at Winchester: changing local, national and international visual art and craft exhibitions
- Computing and ICT facilities throughout WSA: large scale specialist printers; ICT facilities also available on the Highfield campus
- WSA Library. Specialist collections and resources, including the Artists' book Collection, the Knitting Reference Library, and the DVD and video collections together with specialist inductions and support linked to your course of study

Methods for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

You will have the opportunity to have your say on the quality of the programme in the following ways:

- Completing student evaluation questionnaires for each module of the programme.
- Acting as a student representative on various committees, e.g. Staff/Student Liaison Committees, School Programmes Committee OR providing comments to your student representative to feedback on your behalf.
- Serving as a student representative on Faculty Scrutiny Groups for programme validation.
- Taking part in programme validation meetings by joining a panel of students to meet with the Faculty Scrutiny Group.

Further details on the University's quality assurance processes are given in the [Quality Handbook](#).

Career Opportunities

On the MA Communication Design programme you will explore the design theories, tools and practices used by professional designers and design researchers working with networked digital media. This means exploring user modelling techniques, design research methods, how to define a problem space, idea generation, prototyping and final production.

Through the University's Excel Southampton placement programme, Communication Design students have undertaken placements with a range of local organisations. Possible career destinations include: Digital Designer Web Designer, Interaction Designer, User Experience Designer, User Interface Designer, Information Designer, Data Visualiser, Mobile Designer, Digital Product Developer, Graphic Designer, Front-end Designer, Visual Designer, Print / Digital Publishing Designer, Design Researcher, Brand / Content Manager, Project Manager, Artworker.

External Examiner(s) for the programme

Name: Ruth Blacksell - University of Reading

Students must not contact External Examiner(s) directly, and external examiners have been advised to refer any such communications back to the University. Students should raise any general queries about the assessment and examination process for the programme with their Course Representative, for consideration through Staff: Student Liaison Committee in the first instance, and Student representatives on Staff: Student Liaison Committees will have the opportunity to consider external examiners' reports as part of the University's quality assurance process.

External examiners do not have a direct role in determining results for individual students, and students wishing to discuss their own performance in assessment should contact their Personal Academic Tutor in the first instance.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information can be found in the programme handbook

Appendix 1:

Students are responsible for meeting the cost of essential textbooks, and of producing such essays, assignments, laboratory reports and dissertations as are required to fulfil the academic requirements for each programme of study. In addition to this, students registered for this programme also have to pay for:

Additional Costs

Type	Details
Accommodation and Travel	The Union Southampton provide a mini free bus service which runs every 2 hours between the Winchester Campus and the Highfield Campus. Students are responsible for all other daily travel expenses.
Art Equipment and Materials: Drawing paper; painting materials; sketchbooks	Students on the Studio pathways will be required to purchase Sketchbooks the cost of which will vary.
Art Equipment and Materials: Fabric, Thread, Wool	Students taking the Studio based Fashion Design and Textile Design Pathway will be required to purchase their own materials, the cost of which will vary. A student can choose the quality.
Design equipment and materials	Standard construction/modelling materials will be provided where appropriate, unless otherwise specified in a module profile. For customisation of designs/models calling for material other than standard construction/ modelling materials, students will bear the costs of such alternatives.
Exhibition Materials	The programme features exhibitions of student work and students will be required to purchase the materials they need to display their work to a professional standard.
Optional Visits (e.g. museums, galleries)	Some modules may include optional visits to a museum, galleries, or industry. You will normally be expected to cover the cost of travel, admission and food unless otherwise specified in the module profile.
Parking costs (including on placements at hospitals)	Free parking is not normally available on campus to students.
Printing and Photocopying Costs	Where possible, coursework such as essays; projects; dissertations is likely to be submitted on line. However, there are some items where it is not possible to submit on line and students will be asked to provide a printed copy. A list of the University printing costs can be found here: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/isolutions/students/printing/
Stationery	You will be expected to provide your own day-to-day stationery items, e.g. pens, pencils, notebooks, etc). Any specialist stationery items will be specified under the Additional Costs tab of the relevant module profile.
Textbooks	Where a module specifies core texts these should generally be available on the reserve list in the library. However due to demand, students may prefer to buy their own copies. These can be purchased from any source. Some modules suggest reading texts as optional background reading. The library may hold copies of such texts, or alternatively you may wish to purchase your own copies. Although not essential reading, you may benefit from the additional reading materials for the module.

In some cases you'll be able to choose modules (which may have different costs associated with that module) which will change the overall cost of a programme to you. Details of such costs will be listed in the Module Profile. Please also ensure you read the section on additional costs in the University's Fees, Charges and Expenses Regulations in the University Calendar available at www.calendar.soton.ac.uk.