

Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification

Programme Title: Master of Design in Communication Design

Please note that this programme specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2024-25 Academic Year.

1. Programme Details:

Programme Title	Master of Design in Communication Design
HECOS Code	100632
School	School of Design
Programme Leader	Brian Cairns
Minimum Duration of Study	24 months, registered study
Maximum Duration of Study	48 months, registered study
Mode of Study	Full-time
Award to be Conferred	Master of Design in Communication Design
Exit Awards	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma MDes in Communication Design
SCQF Level:	11
Credits:	240

Academic Session	2024-25
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2024

2. Awarding Institution	University of Glasgow
3. Teaching Institutions	The Glasgow School of Art
3.1 Campus	Glasgow
4. Lead School/Board of Studies	School of Design
5. Other Schools/Board of Studies	N/A
6. Programme Accredited By (PSRBs)	N/A

7. Entry Qualifications	
7.1 Highers	N/A
7.2 A Levels	N/A
7.3 Other	<p>Applications to the MDes in Communication Design programme can occur at any time during the academic year; the admissions cycle begins in late September for intake in the following September. Although there are no deadlines, early application is encouraged in order to ensure a place on the programme.</p> <p>All applicants should normally have a good honours degree in a relevant subject area or equivalent professional practice. The admissions requirements for the MDes in Communication Design programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fully completed application form, including two references.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of a 500-word written text outlining personal motivation for undertaking postgraduate study, and specific reasons for applying to the programme. • Submission of a portfolio of work (20-30 images, at 300 dpi, with an accompanying image list). • Demonstration of critical awareness at interview (if conducted). • Overseas applicants who are unable to attend for interview must submit the proposal and portfolio work. In addition, a remote interview may be required. Overseas applicants for whom English is not their first language should normally obtain IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in all components;
7.4 English Language Requirements	<p>All students will have to provide evidence of English language proficiency when applying.</p> <p>International Students</p> <p>Students who require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK must meet one of the following requirements in order to gain entry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in all components; • complete an acceptable Pre-sessional English Language Programme taught in the UK with an outcome that equates to the IELTS scores as stated above. <p>Students who have a degree from an English speaking country, or are a national of an English speaking country as listed in the UKVI Guidance, may use this as proof of English language ability.</p>

8. Programme Scope:

The two-year programme in Communication Design is a broad one that can accommodate practice being produced by students working both within and between specialist areas of Communication Design. Students on the programme can explore their individual specialisms in the areas of photography, illustration and graphic design, should they wish to remain within such parameters. At the same time, students challenging the existing boundaries of specialist practice within Communication Design are not confined to one area of production; indeed, the programme's structure and content delivery support and facilitate interdisciplinary work. The programme format adopted by this programme is a two-year, 240 credit master's model. The sustained length of the programme enables its students to devote additional time to the production of an enhanced portfolio of work.

The programme reflects the importance of disciplinary autonomy and interdisciplinary dialogue and approaches via studio-based practice and its location within a supportive and diverse postgraduate community. The programme aims to emphasise formal and informal cross-disciplinary discourses within the Stage 1 core course on Design Research Methods and Stage 2 PGT elective courses.

9. Programme Structure:		
Stage 1	Credits	SCQF Level
(COURSE CODE) Design Research Methods	20	11
PCMD103 Studio Practice	40	11
Total	60	
Exit Award	PgCert	
Stage 2		
Elective from PGT menu	20	11
PCMD204 Developing Studio Practice	40	11
Total	60	
Exit Award	PgDip	
Stage 3		
PCMD301 Consolidating of Studio Practice	100	11
PCMD302 Critical Reflective Journal	20	11
Total	120	
Exit Award	MDes	

9.1 Programme Structure – Exchange In/Exchange Out/Study Abroad:

N/A

10. What are the requirements for progressing from each stage?

A student will be permitted to progress to Stage 3 only if they have obtained a grade point average of C3(12.0) or above in the taught courses (Stage 1 & 2) with at least 75% of the credits at grade D3(9) or above and all credits at grade F3(6) or above.

11. Programme Aims:

The MDes in Communication Design is practice-led and process-oriented in relation to definitions of broad design practices. It is also committed to the acquisition of principles within design theory relating to educational and commercial contexts. The programme provides rigorous methods for the interrogation of visual and textual research, posing questions relating to the role of the designer in society, and fundamental questions regarding personal and social responsibility.

The programme aims to:

- Offer each individual student the opportunity to critically develop their work in the context of a rigorous but supportive intellectual climate.
- Encourage students to identify and explore key contextual issues relevant to their practice as contemporary designers.
- Develop students' awareness and knowledge base in communication design philosophy, theory, practice and research in the context of innovative forms of communication design.

- Enable Communication Design graduates to critically evaluate their work and that of their peers in the context of contemporary design practices.
- Enable students to achieve the highest possible standards in their work, so that graduates have the confidence, maturity and intellectual and interpersonal skills necessary to function successfully in the communication design field.
- Equip students with the highly developed intellectual, practical and interpersonal skills deemed necessary for careers in design.

11.1 Stage 1 Aims:

Stage 1 (Pg Cert) – Semester 1 Weeks 1 to 15: 60 credits

The programme aims at Stage 1 are designed to allow students the opportunity to acquire and understand the key principles of theory, research and practice within the field of Communication Design. Students successfully completing this stage of the programme can advance to Stage 2 (PG Dip).

Stage 1 of the taught postgraduate programme in Communication Design aims to offer each student the opportunity to:

- Introduce students to critical reflection of own practice.
- Review students practice in relation to proposal/s.
- Encourage students to critically evaluate their practice in a historical, social, political, ethical and theoretical context.
- Encourage students to identify their critical position in relation to their practice.
- Introduce students to fundamental principles of research in relation to studio practice.

Stage 1 Design Research Methods: course aims are detailed in the related course specification.

11.2 Stage 2 Aims:

Stage 2 (Pg Dip) – Semester 2 Weeks 1 to 15: 60 credits

The programme aims at Stage 2 are designed to build upon and develop a greater understanding of the production processes and craft skills as well as the conceptual and research components acquired in Stage 1. Students will be expected to develop a proposal of study outlining their intended area of research at Masters level. Students successfully completing this stage of the MDes programme can advance to the Masters stage, Stage 3.

Stage 2 of the taught postgraduate programme in Communication Design aims to:

- Further develop students' ability to critically evaluate their practice in relation to design issues within historical, critical and theoretical fields of enquiry;
- Enable students to begin to resolve their practice on the basis of critical re-appraisal;
- Develop students' abilities to present their work to a professional standard;
- Promote a level of creativity, originality and initiative in response to critical, theoretical and historical issues;
- Develop the ability to identify and formulate new critical insights into established practice;
- Foster further skills and confidence in the preparation and presentation, both written and oral, of research-based critical analysis.

Stage 2 Electives: course aims are detailed in the related elective course specifications.

11.3 Stage 3 Aims:

Semester 1 – (Weeks 1 – 15) & Semester 2 – (Weeks 1 – 15): 30 Weeks in Total (120 credits)

Stage 3 programme aims are designed to offer the student the opportunity to develop an individual (or group) practice-led portfolio of work that demonstrates a conceptually considered, research-driven understanding of the theory, methodologies and practicalities of Communication Design within a real-world context.

Stage 3 of the MDes programme in Communication Design aims to:

- Enable students to produce a body of work that demonstrates a resolution of practice and critical understanding;
- Prepare students for the publication and presentation of final works.
- Allow students to confidently contextualise their own work within the parameters of contemporary design practices.

The Critical Reflective Journal (20 credit) course aims to:

- Assist students in the production of a Critical Reflective Journal (CRJ).
- Encourage students to identify how theory can inform their practice.
- Encourage students to engage in academic discourse/s surrounding Communication Design practice and theory.
- Deliver publication design skills that enable students to produce a CRJ publication.
- Develop students as reflective practitioners.

12. Intended Learning Outcomes of Programme:

After full participation in and successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

12.1 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 1

Knowledge and Understanding

- Demonstrate a knowledge of the contemporary context within which design practice occurs (technological, aesthetic, economic and theoretical).
- Display a critical understanding of relevant concepts, principles, research methods and methodologies through project work and practice.

Applied Knowledge and Understanding

- Communicate to others - through project work and in presentations - the underlying theoretical and practical framework within which contemporary design activity occurs.
- Demonstrate an ability to edit and select viable courses of action through practical projects.

Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others

- Develop skills to enable independent learning (self-directed learning) of theoretical and practical processes.
- Develop group working skills through the completion of practical projects.
- Acquire an understanding of key production processes used within the creative industries and their relationship to contemporary design strategies.

At the end of Stage 1 student should have the ability to demonstrate:

- A critical understanding of the principles of Communication Design, in order to contextualise their own practice.

- To critically reflect and reassess their own practice.
- Communicate their critical self-evaluation to peers.
- Reflect on the critical feedback of staff and peers.
- Allow students to confidently contextualise their own work within the parameters of contemporary design practices.
- Provide students with rigorous understanding of research ethics as relevant to their research/practice.

Stage 1 Design Research Methods: course intended learning outcomes are detailed in the related course specification.

12.2 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 2

Knowledge and Understanding

- A critical knowledge of design techniques and practices within contemporary culture and industry.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Communication Design through the presentation of suitable practical and theoretical project work.
- Recognise, understand and manage effectively different technical and creative approaches to the process of design.

Applied Knowledge and Understanding

- Identify, define and conceptualise new and abstract problems and relate these to issues of pertinence within Communication Design.
- Communicate to others a critical knowledge of appropriate research methods and their comparative efficacy.
- Evidence a confident ability to edit and select viable courses of action through practical projects.

Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others

- Develop advanced skills and independent problem-solving skills of theoretical and practical processes, and an understanding of the collaborative processes within design practice.
- Further develop group working skills at a strategic level through the iterations of ideas and methods for completion of practical projects.
- Develop an in-depth knowledge of the social, technological and industrial drivers of design practices in contemporary culture.

At the end of the Stage 2, each student should have the ability to demonstrate:

- A thorough understanding of the relation between research and practice informing the development of relevant project work.
- A consideration of the wider context of the project including social, political, ethical, historical, cultural and theoretical aspects.

Each student should have the ability to:

- Communicate effectively with the chosen audience of the student project.
- Be able to collaborate effectively with other as appropriate in a variety of situations.
- Acquired technical knowledge to implement proposals relative to studio practice.

Stage 2 Electives: course intended learning outcomes are detailed in the related elective course specifications.

12.3 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 3

Knowledge and Understanding

- The ability to plan and execute a significant research project that investigates either individual or group themes within the field of Communication Design, and its relation to contemporary culture.
- Demonstrate and reflect upon the uses of Communication Design through the planning and execution of a Masters project.
- Recognise, understand, manage and critically reflect upon, to a high level, a range of technical and creative approaches to the processes of design.

Applied Knowledge and Understanding

- Critically review and analyse existing problems, sources and knowledge in a manner that allows informed judgement and critical appreciation.
- Combine complex processes in the production of a research project in relation to Communication Design.
- Communicate to a specialist audience a critical and reflective knowledge of Communication Design through the execution of a Masters research project.
- Pursue a project to a professional standard with a rigorous academic reflection on the processes undertaken.

Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others

- Evidence an in-depth knowledge of the social, technological and industrial drivers of design practices in contemporary culture.
- Demonstrate and communicate to others a sophisticated analysis and critical reflection on personal learning through the production of a Critical Reflective Journal (CRJ) and project submission.
- Demonstrate to others a critical knowledge of key Communication Design processes used within the creative industries through the production of a Masters research project and associated Critical Reflective Journal.

The intended Learning outcomes for Stage 3 build on the previous intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in Stage 1 and 2 for Studio Practice and Developing Studio Practice.

At the end of Stage 3 students should have the ability to:

- Demonstrate informed judgment in relation to their own practice.
- Demonstrate an awareness of own position within the context of contemporary practice.
- Initiate a plan for their future career development.
- Develop a significant portfolio of work.
- Demonstrate critical judgement in the selection of work for submission or publication.

At the end of the Critical Reflective Journal (20 credit) course, each student should have the ability to:

- Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of contemporary design theory and practice, and its relation to their own work.
- Engage with academic discourse/s surrounding Communication Design theory and practice.
- Present research findings in an appropriate visual and textual context.
- Demonstrate an awareness of contemporary and historical debates surrounding practice.
- Demonstrate independent learning in the development of a CRJ.
- Demonstrate effective time and project management skills to realise the CRJ.

13. Learning and Teaching Approaches:

In the context of Communication Design, Studio can be defined as both a physical, shared space, and a digital environment. The term is also used to cover the activities within these spaces, including workshops, seminars, group discussions, individual and group tutorials, and peer learning.

Students will be expected to take significant responsibility for the management of their learning. Emphasis will be placed on self-reliance and personal academic development.

The principal teaching strategies employed on this programme are:

Self-Directed Learning and Research

In line with other taught postgraduate programmes at GSA, significant emphasis in the Communication Design programme is placed on self-directed study, from project design and development, to gaining theoretical knowledge through traditional research methods.

Lectures and Seminar

Lectures and seminars are used to disseminate theoretical, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues underpinning practical studio work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials or studio sessions or further enquiry in self-directed learning or research.

Design Workshops / Studio Sessions

Design workshops are practical classes in which ideas from lectures and seminars may be tested out, or new concepts introduced and explored. These may vary from IT sessions in which students are introduced to particular pieces of software, to practical modelling classes in which prototypes are designed and roughed. Depending on the focus of the workshop, students may work independently or in groups.

Critiques

The critique (or 'crit') is an important learning device used to generate peer debate regarding the overall success of concepts, and their practical realisation within the context of a project brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers and tutors through appropriate visual and verbal means (models, portfolios, Powerpoint, and so on). The crit enables the development of key presentation skills, and encourages students to give constructive feedback on each other's work. Although facilitated and guided by staff, critiques allow students to fully explore all aspects of practical submissions.

Tutorials

The tutorial system is designed to provide academic support through individual meetings with staff. At these one-to-one meetings, individual projects and pieces of work are discussed, as well as progress on the programme overall. Tutorials are also a means where feedback from students concerning all aspects of the programme can be raised.

Guest Speakers

Input from visiting lecturers and guest speakers will enable postgraduate Communication Design students access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial contexts.

Enrichment of Learning Experience

Staff expertise, professional practice and interests will directly inform curriculum content, enhancing research-teaching linkages. Although the School of Design has considerable staff expertise in the areas covered by the programme, guest speakers and visiting lecturers – academic researchers, industry professionals, practicing designers – will be brought in to run sessions covering other areas.

Students on the programme may negotiate access to the research activities and projects within the School of Design. From time to time, it is recognised that student involvement in these projects is desirable for the following reasons:

Access to leading edge research germane to their programme of study.
Experience with businesses involved in Communication Design.
A broader understanding of industrial contexts.

However, it is also recognised that student involvement in live research projects has the potential to clash with course work and introduce unnecessary pressure. To ensure this does not happen, the following conditions will apply to ensure that such work is appropriate to the general area of study and properly managed academically within the framework of the course:

- The work involved should be in the general subject area of the programme and have direct relevance within course descriptors.
- The work should serve as a direct equivalent for the course work it is replacing.
- No additional requirements are added to course work or the assessment process.
- The time taken to undertake the work should be agreed in advance through discussion with programme staff.
- Proper recording of the tasks involved should be made in a manner consistent with normal course monitoring processes.
- Regular meetings with students and the programme leader will be held to monitor progress and ensure an appropriate and balanced workload.
- While it is noted that such work will be of benefit to students, it might also be the case that it will require additional periods of time.

All of the above should be the subject of a document signed by the student concerned and the programme and/or course leader.

14. Assessment Methods:

There will be three summative assessment points throughout the programme, each representing an exit qualification. Students may exit the programme with a Postgraduate Certificate after successfully completing Stage 1, or a Postgraduate Diploma after successfully completing Stage 2. Interim awards will need to be surrendered if a student resumes their studies and successfully achieves a higher exit award.

The process for the assessment of the 3 stages will comprise: Internal assessment; Common postgraduate exam board to agree awards and progression between Stages.

In addition, Stage 3 will also comprise an external assessment stage, which will be reported to the Final Exam Board. The assessment of the MDes Communication Design programme will be

regulated by the GSA Code of Assessment, which follows the University of Glasgow postgraduate template.

The criteria of assessment are linked directly to the learning outcomes for the PgCert, PgDip and Masters stages of the programme.

The programme provides two forms of assessment, formative and summative. Formative assessment will take the form of seminars, tutorials, and so on, which provide the opportunity to refine and develop key principles in fields of enquiry, and to prepare for submission in the summative assessments, i.e. in assessed projects and coursework, and in the final submission for a Masters award, or in the case of those exiting at Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma level, for the assessed projects and coursework.

For all three stages of the programme, students will normally be assessed on the presentation of practical work, written submissions and/or verbal presentations. Each course will be examined against its specific Learning Outcomes.

Pg Cert: At the end of Stage 1, for those wishing to exit with a PgCert, assessment based on practical and/or written work will take place.

Pg Dip: At the end of Stage 2, assessment provides a point for those wishing to exit with the PgDip. Assessment consists of a review of practical and/or written work.

At this stage of the programme, students can elect to continue their study at Masters level. All students selecting this option must complete a proposal of study for the final Stage.

Masters: At the end of Stage 3, assessment consists of a review of practical work, written submission (in the form of a Critical Reflective Journal (CRJ)) publication. Interviews with the External Examiners may take place if the student has been selected as part of the sample representing a cross section of the programme cohort's work.

15. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and Other External or Internal Reference Points:

GSA Strategic Plan
GSA Education Strategy
SCQF Level 11 Descriptor

16. Additional Relevant Information:

All GSA Degree programmes are validated by the University of Glasgow and the GSA's Programme Regulations are published in the [University of Glasgow University Regulations](#).

These regulations include the requirements in relation to:

- (a) Award of the degree
- (b) Progression requirements
- (c) (Early exit awards)

In referring to regulations for degree programmes, students should consult the University Regulations which were in force in the academic session in which they first registered for the degree programme in question.