

**Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification**

**Programme Title: Master of Design in Graphics/Illustration/Photography**

*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:**

<b>Programme Title</b>	Master of Design in Graphics/Illustration/Photography
<b>HECOS Code</b>	100061/100062/100962
<b>School</b>	School of Design
<b>Programme Leader</b>	Brian Cairns
<b>Minimum Duration of Study</b>	12 months, registered study
<b>Maximum Duration of Study</b>	24 months, registered study
<b>Mode of Study</b>	Full time
<b>Award to be Conferred</b>	Master of Design in Graphics/Illustration/Photography
<b>Exit Awards</b>	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma Master of Design
<b>SCQF Level:</b>	11
<b>Credits:</b>	180

<b>Academic Session</b>	2024-25
<b>Date of Approval</b>	PACAAG August 2022

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

<b>7. Entry Qualifications</b>	
<b>7.1 Highers</b>	N/A
<b>7.2 A Levels</b>	N/A
<b>7.3 Other</b>	<p>Applications to the MDes in Graphics/Illustration/Photography Programmes 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 programmes.</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 Graphics / Illustration / Photography programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fully completed application form, including two references.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of a 500-word written text outlining personal motivation for undertaking postgraduate study, and specific reasons for applying to the programme.</li> <li>• Submission of a portfolio of work (20-30 images, 300 dpi, plus an image list).</li> <li>• Demonstration of critical awareness at interview (if conducted).</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>7.4 English Language Requirements</b></p>	<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"> <li>• IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in all components;</li> <li>• complete an acceptable Pre-sessional English Language Programme taught in the UK with an outcome that equates to the IELTS scores as stated above.</li> </ul> <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 one-year MDes in Graphics/Illustration/Photography is a traditional extension from BA (Hons) practice. It is intended specifically for practitioners working in the individual fields named in the programme title.

Application is made via a portfolio, and a statement that describes the nature of the candidate's intended project(s) throughout the year. In most cases, this will extend directly from undergraduate studies and/or professional experience, and will include examples of previous works.

The general approach Core Research Methods for Design course takes is framed around 'research as response' and 'research as revision' to support practice-led enquiries in studio and professional contexts. The course does not privilege specific ways of thinking about research; it underpins the formulation of research questions through practical engagement with craft process, material awareness, data gathering, contextual and critical evaluation of primary and secondary sources. It establishes a clear value, process and role for collaboration as a professional aptitude. The CRM aims to build confidence across the cohort as students work towards establishing group and individual frameworks for understanding how research can inform design decisions, and to enhance skills in communicating research through visual, oral and written means. The pace of delivery is varied across the CRM course, involving lectures, seminars and workshops for interdisciplinary plenaries, studio groups and individuals.

The stage 2 electives are provided across GSA and support students to further deepen and explore their areas of research interest. This will enable an intensification of discipline oriented-research methods and also foster interdisciplinary learning which is one of the areas of focus in stage 2.

### 9. Programme Structure:

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<b>Stage 1</b>		
PCXS106 Core Research Methods for Design*	20	11
PCMD103 Studio Practice	40	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	
<b>Exit Award</b>	<b>PgCert</b>	
<b>Stage 2</b>		
Elective from PGT menu	20	11
PCMD204 Developing Studio Practice	40	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	
<b>Exit Award</b>	<b>PgDip</b>	
<b>Stage 3</b>		
PMDG/PMDI/PMDP323 Consolidating Studio Practice	40	11
PMDG/PMDI/PMDP322 Critical Reflective Journal	20	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	
<b>Exit Award</b>	<b>MDes</b>	
*In exceptional circumstances it may be possible in the early stages of the programme to consider an alternate Core Research Methods course in Stage 1		

### 9.1 Programme Structure – Exchange In:

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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography 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 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 own 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.
- Enable graduates to critically evaluate their work and that of their peers in the context of contemporary design practices.
- 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 enable 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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography aims to offer students 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.
- Encourage students to engage with discourse of the relevance of design in relation to historical, contemporary, socio-cultural and political contexts and discourses.

Stage 1, The Core Research Methods for Design course aims to:

- provide students with opportunities to critically develop disciplinary research methods;
- enable students to autonomously design their own research project/object/practice with a critical grounding in appropriate research methods both relevant to their disciplinary specialization and, where relevant, enabling of trans, multi, or inter-disciplinarity;
- provide students with rigorous understanding of research ethics as relevant to their research/practice;
- facilitate critical reflection on the relationship between forms of research and modes of practice in order to encourage robust and/or innovative applications of existing modes.

### **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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography programme can advance to the Masters stage, Stage 3.

Stage 2 of the taught postgraduate programme in Graphics/Illustration/Photography aims to offer each student the opportunity to:

- Further develop students' ability to critically reflect on their practice.

- Develop students' abilities to present their work to a professional standard.
- Develop students' ability to effectively communicate ideas to staff and peers.
- Promote creativity, originality and initiative in response to thorough research.
- Critically reflect on existing contemporary practice.
- Encourage students to express their position on discourses relevant to design.
- Encourage students to express their position in relation to social, ethical, political, cultural, historical and theoretical context.

Stage 2, Elective aims to:

- Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices;
- Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory;
- Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism;
- Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study.

### **11.3 Stage 3 Aims:**

Stage 3 (Masters) – Semester 3 Weeks 1-15: 60 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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography aims to offer each student the opportunity 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.
- Enable 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 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 each student should have the ability:

- To demonstrate a critical understanding of the principles of Communication Design in order to contextualise their own practice.
- To demonstrate a critical understanding of the re-evaluation and iteration of existing design knowledge, skills and thinking.
- To communicate his/her critical self-evaluation to peers
- To communicate with staff and specialists
- To demonstrate a rigorous understanding of research ethics as relevant to their research / practice.
- Demonstrate critical reflection in the relationship to forms and modes of practice in order to encourage robust and/or innovative application of existing modes.

On successful completion of Core Research Methods for Design course students will be able to:

- Evaluate and adapt methodologies in order to develop and progress projects and practices;
- Generate new perspectives on their practice by developing sustainable research frameworks;
- Demonstrate research vocabularies and methods relevant for their professional practice;
- Collate primary and secondary sources, effectively managing data;
- Document and communicate research experiences using visual, oral and written methods

### **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 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.
- 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: 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 enable 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 Masters journal 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 the course, 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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography programme is placed on self-directed study, from project design and development, to gaining theoretical knowledge through traditional research methods.

#### **Lectures and Seminars**

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 others' work. Although facilitated and guided by staff, critiques enable 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 students from Communication Design access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial contexts.

**Enrichment of Learning Experience**

Students on the Graphics/Illustration/Photography programme will be taught by staff informed by staff interests and knowledge base that 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.

Assessment in Stages 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 will take place in week 13 of the stages.

The table below details the points in the programme where formal assessment is expected to take place.

Stage	Summative assessment points
Stage 1: PgCert	Semester 1 Week 13
Stage 2: PgDip	Semester 2 Week 13
Stage 3: Masters	Semester 3 Week 13

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 Graphics/Illustration/Photography programme will be regulated by the GSA Code of Assessment, which follows the University of Glasgow postgraduate template. (For further information, please consult the GU calendar).

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.

Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement.

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 as outlined in the curriculum section.

PgCert: 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.

PgDip: 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.

Masters: All students must complete a proposal of study for the final Stage. At the end of Stage 3, assessment consists of a review of practical work, written submission in the form of a Critical Reflective Journal publication (CRJ).

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 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy  
SCQF Level 11 Descriptor

#### **20. Additional Relevant Information:**

Please refer to the University Calendar for the full PGT regulations:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/uniregs/regulations2019-20/gsa/genericpgt/>