

Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification

Programme Title: Master of Design in Communication Design



Image: Eunjoo Lee

1. Programme Details	
Programme Title	Master of Design in Communication Design
School	School of Design
Programme Leader	Brian Cairns
Award to be Conferred	Master of Design in Communication Design
Exit Awards	Stage 1: Postgraduate Certificate in Communication Design Stage 2: Postgraduate Diploma in Communication Design Stage 3: Master of Design in Communication Design
SCQF Level	11
Credits	240
Mode of Study	Full-time (24 months)
HECOS Code	100632

Academic Session	2026-27
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2026

Awarding Institution	University of Glasgow
Teaching Institutions	Glasgow School of Art
Campus	Glasgow
Lead School/Board of Studies	School of Design
Other Schools/Board of Studies	N/A
Programme Accredited By (PSRBs)	N/A

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	N/A
A Levels	N/A
Other	An undergraduate Degree with a minimum 2.2 or equivalent in a relevant subject area or equivalent professional practice. Additional entry requirements: Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio of work, along with satisfactory academic references and a personal statement as parts of their applications. Applicants may also be required to attend an interview as part of their admissions assessment.
English Language Requirements	Applicants who are not a national of, nor have obtained a degree in one of the countries on the approved UKVI exemption list or those who require a Student Visa, will need to provide evidence of their English language ability. GSA's preferred test is the IELTS for UKVI (Academic) test taken at a UKVI approved test centre. GSA require all

	students, who require a student visa, to meet the following requirements to gain entry: • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in all components; • An alternative Accepted English Language Test which can be found on the Postgraduate 'How to Apply' page of the GSA website.
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3. Programme Introduction

The Master of Design in Communication Design is a two-year, full-time programme placing an emphasis on practice-led research and experimentation. The programme offers the opportunity for students from diverse prior study to develop as critically reflective practitioners or researchers and for existing practitioners to reassess their practice through a focused period of research, making and reflection.

Students engage with a range of approaches to learning, research and theory to informing their creative practice, situating their practice within a wider contemporary and historical communication design context. Stage 3 in the second year of study, providing an extended opportunity for in-depth research and enhanced critical reflection, facilitating future transitions to professional practice, research or further study.

The programme supports students to challenge preconceptions of Communication Design in an inclusive and interdisciplinary studio learning environment through the sharing and exchange of knowledge and understanding. Students can focus their study within a specific discipline or explore interdisciplinary and emergent communication design practice. Students engage with complex issues exploring the designer's role in society in relation to relevant socio-political, ethical environmental, and cultural contexts.

Throughout the programme, students produce a series of critically reflective publications that provide opportunities to contextualise, critically reflect and develop their practice. In Stage 2 this is an embedded component in the Stage 2 'Developing Practice' course comprising of a 3000-word critically reflective publication assessed as part of the studio submission. In Stage 3 'A Critically Reflective Practice' is a separate course complementing the Studio 3: Consolidating Practice course providing additional opportunities for students to consolidate their critical reflective skills, building and expanding on the methods introduced in Stages 1 and 2; assessed as a 6000-word critically reflective publication.

Furthermore, the programme is structured to provide both formal and informal cross-disciplinary discourses within the Stage 1 core course via the Design schools' shared Design Research Methods course and Stage 2 PGT elective courses that reflect a sharing and collaborative ethos.

4. Programme Aims

The aims of the programme are to:

1. equip our graduating students with the confidence and curiosity to apply practice-led research to communication design practice.
2. develop student understanding of a wide range of research skills, to identify new insight and contribute to contemporary academic discourse in communication design.
3. equip students with the specialist critical reflective skills required to construct new knowledge and meaning through their creative practice.
4. establish and develop students' creative practice demonstrated through self-directed and collaborative projects.
5. equip students with the appropriate methods and skills to communicate complex ideas to a range of audiences, demonstrating an awareness of diverse perspectives.
6. equip our students with the skills to identify and respond to complex ethical, societal, political and environmental contexts.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. demonstrate an extensive range of applied principles, theory and methods of practice-led research.
2. evidence rigorous interdisciplinary research informing creative practice, demonstrating originality and creativity.
3. evidence advanced critical analysis, evaluation and reflection on personal learning and creative practice.
4. plan and execute a significant self-directed project or projects, evidencing speculation and thinking through making.
5. communicate complex ideas to a range of audiences, applying specialised skills and methods.
6. situate their practice in communication design in response to complex ethical, societal, political, and environmental contexts.

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

A range of teaching and learning approaches are employed to direct student learning with the curriculum to achieve the intended learning outcomes. These include:

- Briefings
- Introductions, Inductions and demonstrations
- Technical and process workshops

- Studio activities
- Peer-led activities
- Lectures, seminars, presentations and study visits
- Individual and group tutorials
- Staff/Student/Peer reviews of student work
- Critical reflective methods, textual, dialogic and visual.
- Journal and documentation of learning activities
- Continual reflective self-evaluation of progress and learning

Students are introduced to skills, including analogue, digital, software, material and technical knowledge, through inductions, demonstrations, and workshops.

Independent learning skills will be developed and supported through guided activities and digital online learning resources available on Canvas.

A variety of teaching and learning approaches, including in person, blended and online learning and delivery, are employed to support student engagement with the curriculum and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Formative feedback offers students the opportunity to obtain ongoing tutor and peer feedback through the development of their summative submissions over the length of each course. Students are supported in their learning through a range of formative activities with staff and peers, such as workshops, reviews and tutorials offering ongoing formative feedback as they progress through each course within this programme.

As Stage 3 spans two semesters, both Stage 3 courses include an additional formative assessment point in which students' formative assessment submission receives an indicative grade and feedback, made available to the student to inform and support their summative assessment submissions.

Summative Assessment is designed to support students to review, collate and communicate work produced in response to a self-directed project or projects and learning and teaching activities associated with the programme and its courses.

Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment.

8. Programme Structure

Stage 1				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Studio 1: Introducing Practice	40	11	1 (Year 1)	
Design Research Methods	20	11	1 (Year 1)	
Total Stage Credits	60			

Stage 2				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Studio 2: Developing Practice	40	11	2 (Year 1)	
Postgraduate Elective	20	11	2 (Year 1)	
Total Stage Credits	60			

Stage 3				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Studio 3: Consolidating Practice	80	11	1+2 (Year 2)	
A Critically Reflective Practice	40	11	1+2 (Year 2)	
Total Stage Credits	120			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements

Master of Design in Communication Design students may apply to undertake a period of exchange in Semester 1 of the second Year of study during Semester 1. The exchange is dependent on the approval of the Programme Leader and the acceptance to study by the partner institution.

10. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and Other External Reference Points

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. For further information relevant to this programme see:

QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design. Available from: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

11. Programme Regulations and Requirements for Progression

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.