

Programme Specification

Award and title: MA Graphic Design

<i>School:</i>	School of the Arts
<i>Subject area:</i>	Design
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	September
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	2025-26
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Diploma Graphic Design Postgraduate Certificate Design
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Art and Design February 2017 Master's degree characteristics September 2020
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study ¹ for full time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with Foundation Year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

Graphic communication is one of the most important ways that people communicate and share information. It expresses an idea and conveys information using a myriad of visual channels to inform and educate. The MA Graphic Design helps prepare you to develop a unique perspective and personal voice through investigating a range of design methodologies, approaches, and strategies to inform your own practice. You will study the latest developments in design thinking to establish a core design approach and acknowledge a greater appreciation for how design is transforming the way we learn and communicate. It offers you the opportunity to embrace emerging technologies and enhance your own creativity

MA Graphic Design differentiates itself through the specific characteristics of undertaking design modules that interconnect through design thinking, entrepreneurship, circular economy and fourth revolution, enabling you to make well-informed decisions and apply these to your own design outcome. Furthermore, our programme engagement with industry partners will offer you networking opportunities to collaborate with our partners, visit relevant exhibitions and be inspired by keynote visiting speakers. There is also the potential for you to establish your own business venture through a Grad2Director scheme at York St John University. This programme aims to recruit applicants from a variety of backgrounds such as graphic design, web design, fine art, television, animation, games design, illustration, photography, business, and marketing graduates who would like to hone and refine their skills, knowledge, and competencies in the specialist field. Furthermore, we do encourage applicants from other disciplines who are creative thinkers to apply, as we do promote collaborative and interdisciplinary practices for innovative outcomes.

Work-based learning opportunities throughout the programme have been developed in partnership with our industry contacts. They are structured opportunities which reflect authentic professional activities. There are opportunities throughout the programme to undertake work-related learning in the form of placements and live briefs. This is working in conjunction with our industry partners and networks from across both regional and national design agencies and organisations. Throughout the programme, you will engage with work-based learning by reflecting upon industry practices such as following design methodologies to conduct research and new insights. This information forms a thread between undertaking a body of developmental work during the 'Innovation Project' where you can explore and experiment in response to the data collected. At this stage, you may wish to partner with an industry partner of your own choice where you can work on a specific-related project. Lastly, within the Major Project module, you will be able to follow either a theoretical or practical route, depending on your own choice and the programme will support you either way. There will be ongoing professional feedback and will take place in the form of critique and portfolio reviews.

When possible, regional, national and international field trips are offered within the programme including visits to, galleries, exhibitions, conferences, and industry visits. As part of the student experience, the programme has organised international trips to Lisbon and New York and continues to offer new destinations wherever possible. These trips are generally subsidised by the Design department to help support student studies and on occasions, we ask students to make small financial contributions. Other trips have been to the London Design Museum and to research organisations such as STBY. These opportunities aim to enhance the curriculum content enabling you to examine your professional from a range of cultural and professional contexts.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must:

- Demonstrate examples of your own practice.
- Be interviewed, either in person or online.

To demonstrate you have adequate practical skills for this programme, you will be interviewed to show examples of your own practice. Non-traditional entrants, who may have a successful professional career but may not have UG qualifications, will also be interviewed.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The MA Graphic Design programme aims to:

1. Develop the necessary design and technical skills to understand, interpret and design digital and real-life experiences.
2. Provide multiple opportunities to develop methodologies and techniques for diverse audiences.
3. Provide industry-focused experiences in multi-disciplinary and practice-based talks/lectures and workshops.
4. Create a framework for academic discussion, personal practice and development, allowing you to engage with problems and insights at the forefront of graphic communication.
5. Develop a comprehensive understanding of graphic content and to study the theoretical, ethical, and professional contexts in which your practice is situated.
6. Equip you with critical knowledge, abilities, and methods to become an autonomous and self-directed practitioner.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

7.1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of the ethical considerations and the social impact of emerging technologies.

7.2 Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and application of the principles and methods of research associated with Graphic Design

7.3 Critically appraise design work to make modifications and propose improvements.

7.4 Investigate; critically evaluate audiences, demographics, and communication methods to identify imaginative and innovative solutions.

7.5 Identify, experiment and analyse materials and processes in order to translate ideas into outcomes

7.6 Demonstrate originality and self-direction in problem solving, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks in a professional/industry context.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
DES7025M	7	1	Design Thinking	30	C	x
DES7026M	7	1	Creative Entrepreneur	15	C	x
DES7027M	7	1	Future Design Trends	15	C	x
DES7031M	7	2	Communication Design	30	C	x
DES7032M	7	2	Innovation Project: Graphic Design	30	C	x
DES7033M	7	3	Major Project: Graphic Design	60	C	NC

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level with a mark of 50 to progress.

In semester one, you will undertake a taught 30-credit module in *Design Thinking* over an intensive first week period of scheduled contact time. Design Thinking encourages you to consider human needs and problem solving; it establishes a position that you work for and through other people. Across a further eleven-week period, you will be expected to pursue a range of design methodologies and research investigations. It is worth noting, this is an opportune period for all Design postgraduate disciplines to cohesively interact, share experiences and primarily build a community for knowledge exchange. Running in parallel, are two 15-credit modules, *Creative Entrepreneur* and *Future Design Trends* that promote business design led attributes within the creative industries and reveal foresights into how design is reshaping our future. This combination of modules in semester one, enables you to reflect upon well-informed user centred choices to help establish your own personal direction.

In semester two, you will undertake a taught 30-credit module, *Communication Design* exploring a range of communication channels and platforms, and investigating the visual landscape of photography, typography, wayfinding systems and user interactions to underpin your own creative practice. You will be introduced to industry speakers and participate in field trips, all to enhance your own professional experience. These types of activities will be subsidised, but you may need to make a financial contribution, especially when trips are residential. Ultimately, by the end of this module you will reflect upon your overall research findings to construct a comprehensive design proposal to take forward.

Furthermore, you will complete a supervised 30-credit module *Innovation Project*, that encourages you to collate your proposal and researching findings, forming a blueprint to explore conceptual ideas around a practical or virtual prototype. The module will form a foundation for your Major Project and is an opportunity to explore collaborations with industry professionals and, in some cases; to pursue work related learning to help benefit your own studies.

In your final semester, you will undertake a supervised 60-credit module *Major Project*. The module offers you the opportunity to build upon your previous development work and refine your investigations for implementation through either a theoretical or practical approach. You will be encouraged to continue your engagement with industry professionals, and external partners wherever necessary and produce a meaningful body of work that expresses your own personal voice.

Furthermore, you will have the opportunity to develop and market your ideas through the new initiative 'Grad2Director' scheme at York St John University. The Grad2Director programme aims to support York St John University graduates transform their business ideas into flourishing business opportunities for the future.

Learning, teaching and assessment

The teaching methodology is informed by an in-depth knowledge of design pedagogy, and it incorporates a broad range of practices. We understand design as a practice-based discipline that also reflects upon itself, and we believe that this is true regardless of whether students of Graphic Design have a visual practice. We want you to understand the interactive relationship between media and processes, between ideas and issues, and between designer and consumer with attention to critical and contextual discourse.

The programme has been designed to meet the needs of both students who have just finished undergraduate programmes in the UK/EU and internationally, and returners to learning. It is concerned with ensuring that you can experience a variety of teaching and learning strategies across the modules offered. The modules are structured to facilitate successful achievement of the programme learning outcomes.

You will be provided with a range of teaching and learning strategies across the modules, which include reflective, independent, collaborative and facilitated learning. This process will be achieved through workshops, visiting speakers, field visits; work related learning, seminar discussions, supervised projects and supported VLE learning. You will receive technical supervision through a variety of different workshops to help support your academic project work.

Module feedback will be undertaken at timely points to enable effective progression into the next project, usually at the same time as a portfolio review to enable ongoing holistic assessment. Formative assessment will be employed throughout the programme through a range of tasks, projects, and presentations. Summative assessment will take a variety of forms including portfolio work, creating artefacts, presentation of visual works, research reports and case studies.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations for](#) postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised:

Programme originally approved: