

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>	2026-27
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	Lord Mayors Walk Campus
<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 a fundamental way people share information, express ideas, and educate audiences. It utilises a diverse range of visual channels to inform, inspire, and engage. The MA Graphic Design programme is designed to help you develop a unique perspective and personal voice by exploring a wide range of design methodologies, approaches, and strategies. Through studying the latest developments in design thinking, you will establish a strong creative foundation while gaining a deeper understanding of how design shapes the way we learn, communicate, and interact with the world. This programme encourages you to embrace emerging technologies and enhance your creative practice.

What sets MA Graphic Design apart is its integrated approach, where design thinking, entrepreneurship, the circular economy, and the fourth industrial revolution converge. This structure equips you with the knowledge to make informed design decisions and apply them effectively to your own practice. Additionally, the programme fosters industry engagement, providing opportunities to collaborate with partners, attend exhibitions, and gain insights from keynote practitioners.

Who Should Apply?

This programme welcomes applicants from diverse backgrounds, including graphic design, web design, fine art, animation, games design, illustration, photography, television, business, and marketing. Whether you seek to refine your existing skills or transition into graphic design, this programme offers a supportive and interdisciplinary environment that promotes collaboration and innovation. We also encourage creative thinkers from other disciplines to apply, as the programme values diverse perspectives and cross-disciplinary practices.

Industry Engagement & Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is embedded throughout the programme, offering structured opportunities to engage with real-world design challenges. Developed in collaboration with our industry contacts, these experiences mirror professional practices and provide valuable insights into industry methodologies. Throughout your studies, your project direction may lead to a placement or live brief in collaboration with regional and national design agencies and organisations.

The *Innovation Project* module provides a platform for experimentation, allowing you to develop work in response to industry-driven research and insights. You also have the opportunity to collaborate with an industry partner on a project of your choice, gaining real-world experience and professional connections. In the *Major Project module*, you can tailor your studies to align with your aspirations by choosing either a theoretical or practical route. Throughout this process, you will receive ongoing professional feedback, participate in critique sessions, and refine your work through portfolio reviews. These pathways support your transition into industry practice or provide a strong foundation for further academic pursuits, such as undertaking a PhD.

By joining MA Graphic Design, you will immerse yourself in a dynamic learning environment that prepares you to navigate and shape the evolving landscape of contemporary design.

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.yorksj.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.

These aims and outcomes have been developed by mapping onto the QAA master's characteristics, the FHEQ level 7 guidelines and York St John graduate attributes.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
DES7025M	7	1	Design Thinking	30	C	x
DES70**M	7	1	Technological Revolution	30	C	x
DES7031M	7	2	Communication Design	30	C	NC

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-compensable. A non-compensable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level with a mark of 50 to progress.

In the first semester, you will undertake a 30-credit **Design Thinking module** over six weeks of scheduled contact time. This module encourages you to approach design with a human-centered perspective, emphasizing problem-solving through an understanding of human needs. You will explore a range of design methodologies and research strategies, fostering collaboration across postgraduate disciplines to create a dynamic community for knowledge exchange. Following this, you will engage in the **Technological Revolution module**, which will span six weeks. This module examines advancements in technology and the circular economy, exploring how the creative industries are evolving to shape their own futures. The combination of these two modules provides you with a strong foundation in user-centered design, helping to establish your own creative direction.

The second semester begins with a 30-credit **Communication Design module** for six weeks. Here you will develop your ability to communicate ideas through typography, wayfinding systems, photography and other media channels to underpin your own creative practice. By the end of this module, you will have constructed a comprehensive design proposal to take forward. In the following six weeks, you will undertake the **Innovation Project module**, a supervised 30-credit component that builds upon your research findings. This module allows you to refine your proposal into a conceptual framework, exploring a practical or virtual prototype. It can serve as a foundation for your Major Project or act as a standalone research investigation. The Innovation Project also offers industry collaborations and work-related learning opportunities to enhance your professional development.

In the final semester, you will embark on the **Major Project module** (60 credits), spanning twelve weeks. This self-directed module provides the opportunity to build upon previous research and development or explore a new area of inquiry, culminating in either a theoretical or practical outcome. You will be encouraged to engage with industry professionals where relevant and produce a rigorous, meaningful body of work that reflects your personal creative voice.

This structured approach ensures that you gain a balance of theoretical knowledge, hands-on experience, and industry engagement, equipping you with the skills to navigate the evolving landscape of design practice.

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: