Programme specification

MA Visual Brand Communication

School: School of Art, Design & Computer Science
Entry from: 2018/9 in: September January
Awarding institution: York St John University
Teaching institution: York St John University
Delivery location: London
Programme/s accredited by: Not applicable
Exit awards: Postgraduate Certificate Design
Postgraduate Diploma Design
UCAS code / GTTR / other: Not applicable
Joint Honours combinations: Not applicable
QAA benchmark group(s): Art and Design (February 2017)
Master’s degree characteristics (September 2015)
Mode/s of study: Full-time for 1 year
Part-time for 2 years
Language of study: English
Study abroad opportunities: No

Introduction and special features

To be remembered you need a distinctive and memorable brand narrative, not just a logo. This course focuses on what makes a brand distinctive and its relationship to storytelling. This course trains designers to communicate brand stories graphically: it is a course for designers who want visually decode and critically challenge the field of branding.

The course combines technical, conceptual and strategic approaches with design research methodologies and communication approaches that enable designers to actively participate in critical and strategic decision making rather than simply follow a design brief.

Why study MA Visual Brand Communication?

This programme will enable you to refine and develop your own practice within the subject of brand design and visual brand communication. You will rigorously investigate and question your field of study in order to reflect upon and improve your own design methodologies, approaches, stratagems and communication skills.

You study the latest developments and thinking in design, publishing, branding, advertising, identity, packaging, the internet and all areas of contemporary practice in communication arts. You can select and customise your own skills package from a suite of modules. Software and digital skills are primarily delivered by online learning packages and supplemented by support from specialists. You are encouraged to explore a wide range of media and to mix and match traditional drawing based methods of making with digital and interactive elements.

This course appeals to a wide range of applicants, from home students returning to education after a period in work, to international students with undergraduate experience in other discipline areas. Typically, applicants hold an undergraduate degree in graphic design, visual communication, illustration, communication design or other directly related areas, and/or have professional design experience. However, applicants are considered that indicate a strong aptitude for graduate study within the discipline of visual communication. This includes those
who have studied or worked in related fields such as industrial and interior design, architecture, fine arts, film and journalism.

**Admissions criteria**

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for *postgraduate* study. In addition, you must have:

- A portfolio of visual work
- Non-traditional entrants, who may have a successful professional career but may not have UG qualifications will be interviewed, with their portfolio, either in person or online.

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/](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 Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning (APL/APEL). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

What to expect on this programme? This MA course focuses on the role of the visual within branding. The aim is to produce designers who understand design within a theoretical and commercial context, social and cultural groups, national and international opportunities. Its emphasis is on practical design, supported by theoretical components and the application of clear research methodologies.

As a student you will develop a deeper knowledge of branding and graphic design that will enable you to create appropriate graphic expressions and propositions. You will explore the ways in which an underlying brand strategy can be developed and how it is communicated, how that strategy can drive the creative direction of a brand and, more importantly, how that creative thinking expresses itself coherently.

The **Programme aims** to:

1. Develop the necessary design skills to interpret strategy and brand stratagems into brand expression and visual communication.

2. Provide multiple opportunities to study brand expression and brand/visual communication techniques for diverse markets and cultures.

3. Provide students with industry-focused experience and practice and industry in-course talks/lectures and workshops.

4. Provide a framework for academic discussion, personal practice and personal development, allowing you to engage with problems and insights at the forefront of branding and identity design practice.

5. Develop a critical, analytical, systematic and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of branding and identity design practice and to study the theoretical, ethical and professional contexts in which your practice is situated.

6. Equip you with the knowledge, abilities and methods — creative, conceptual, theoretical, analytical, technical and organisational — that enable you to propose, research, develop and complete a self-directed practice-led project.
Programme learning outcomes

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

7.1 Demonstrate a critically informed knowledge and understanding of ethical considerations and the social impact of particular relevance to their specialist focus within Visual Communication.

7.2 Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the competing critical and theoretical research and methodological models associated with visual communication and brand.

7.3 Express in a sustained critical and reflective manner, an understanding of their chosen field of enquiry.

7.4 Reflect upon, critically evaluate, refine and demonstrate creativity, imagination and innovation in their design practice.

7.5 Discern critically appropriate visual tools to facilitate their specialist focus within Visual Communication.

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, York St John graduate attributes, the imperatives for YSU.London and through detailed market and competitor analysis.

The MA Visual Brand Communication aims to recruit graphic design, web design, fashion, fine art, television, product, games, illustrators, photographers, digital, business and marketing graduates who would like to hone and refine their skills, knowledge and competencies in the specialist field of Visual Brand. These students will need a good grounding in some skills related to this field in advance of admission. This should be evidenced through a portfolio of visual work. It is however, acknowledged that some students are likely to have relatively sophisticated graphics skills, whereas others may have a broader range of visual and design experience. This differentiation will be addressed during the course and there will be opportunities for you to gain additional necessary skills.

The programme differentiates itself though the specific characteristics of the British School of Design, which emphasise digital intelligence, brand, sustainability, product and business development, and consumer behaviour that are coupled with the YSU.London imperatives, which promote engagement with professional practice and industry.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Status of Module*</th>
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<td>Introduction to Digital and Visual Brand Design</td>
<td>15</td>
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*C: Compulsory, CA: Compulsory for award, O: option or E: elective.
Learning, teaching and assessment

The teaching methodology for the British School of Design is informed by an in depth knowledge of design pedagogy and it incorporates a broad range of good practices.

Design is understood by us as a practice-based discipline which also reflects upon itself and we believe that this is true regardless of whether students of 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.

You will be exposed to a range of teaching and learning strategies across the modules. These will include workshop and studio sessions, seminar discussions, supervised projects, design sprints, professional experiences and project work.

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 presentations of visual works, 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.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- University Mission Statement [see page two]
- Strategic Plan 2015-20 [see page four]
- QAA subject benchmark statement
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

Date written / revised: 15/02/18

Programme originally approved: click here to enter a date