

Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design AD471GD

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

Programme title	Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design	School	School of Design
Resulting awards	Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design, and the following exit awards: Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design Professional Diploma in Circular by Design Professional Certificate in Circular by Design	Head of School	Alex Milton
Level	Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications	ECTS credits¹	60 ECTS credits
University award	Graduate Diploma (Major Award) Graduate Certificate (Minor Award) (exit only) Professional Diploma (Special Purpose Award) (exit only) Professional Certificate (Special Purpose Award) (exit only)	Programme type	Postgraduate taught programme delivered flexibly
Programme Co-ordinator	Jessica Hayden	External Examiner	TBC
Programme team	NCAD Staff		

1. Programme Aims and Objectives: Purpose, Vision and Values

Background

NCAD is the lead partner in the Creative Futures Academy, a major new government-funded initiative. In partnership with IADT, UCD and industry partners from across the creative sector, we are developing a range of courses that will empower creative practitioners from a range of disciplines, and at different stages of their learning, with the sustainable and adaptable skills and attributes that they will require to shape the future of Ireland's creative sector.

The Creative Futures Academy will prepare graduates for work in a major sector of the national economy; and support the early and mid-career needs of creative professionals in our fast-changing social, economic and technological contexts. The suite of programmes being developed to form NCAD's Design Futures offering is a key delivery model for NCAD to meet this challenge.

¹ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, where 60 ECTS credits equate to the workload of a full-time academic year (two trimesters)

Purpose

The world needs empowered and enabled creative designers. From upskilling to cross-skilling to reskilling, to finding creative solutions and making new networks, the Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design programme seeks to enable creative practitioners to:

- Enhance their expertise in an existing practice, to refocus their professional direction.
- Immerse themselves in contemporary critical thinking shaping new design futures.
- Connect to communities of practice through industry partnerships and collaborations.
- Shape their learning to suit their availability, needs and ambitions by offering a range of online and in-person learning options.

Circular by Design Programme & Awards

Prof Cert, Prof Dip, Grad Cert, Grad Dip

The circular economy requires the redesign of everything - from materials, to products, to services, to policies, to narratives and communications, to systems and environments. This course creates a stage for the exploration of the complex issues to interrogate and provoke sustainable systemic change. It provides the actionable methodology, tools, practice and theory for learners to design a different future.

Integrating a network of international organisations, charities and companies who are making change happen, this pathway supports embodied learning to encourage acting, as well as making and thinking. Learners connect the materials, the production, the practices, the policies and systems to opportunities for regeneration, rethinking, and reforming.

The role of the designer in the circular economy is of paramount importance, as is the integration of circular economy principles into design practice and thinking. This course supports learners to fabricate critical and vital dialogues in policy, narratives, industry, amongst manufacturers, customers and consumers. It creates the stage for behavioural change, new attitudes, knowledge and skill sets which will shape the future.

Programme Aims

The programme encourages participants to integrate research, creative practice and contemporary methods, theory and contexts.

The modules seek to prepare students, from the broadest range of creative backgrounds, with the practical and theoretical means to develop contemporary design practice and theory within a specialist award, while benefitting from a broader interdisciplinary creative discourse and community of practice.

Successive modules allow participants to develop their specialist practice, their professional, technical and organisational skills and their knowledge and application of critical contexts to:

- EXPAND creative thinking to support a change of perspective across and beyond the sector.
- CONNECT with social and cultural change to create impact.
- POSITION change from a communication and content led place.

- ALIGN learning and teaching to a change-led view of the world, society, economies and sectors in and beyond Ireland.

The programme aims to:

- Improve the exploration, curiosity, ambition, depth and breadth of participants' creative practice in a systematic and insightful manner.
- Continually meet the rapidly changing needs, expectations, aspirations and experiences of today's creative practitioners by improving their professional application as artists, designers, makers, curators or writers.
- Demonstrate the ability to learn and perform at postgraduate level.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the creative process.
- Develop the participants' skills in research and the translation of findings into their creative practice.
- Critically evaluate and engage with contemporary debates regarding practice-based research, practice-led research and cognate creative methodologies.
- Develop participant's knowledge and skills to prepare them for further life-long learning.
- Provide participants with appropriate creative industry and cultural connections through sponsored projects and visiting faculty.
- Assist participants in developing their own practice in relation to contemporary creative practice and discourse. This may be as an artist, designer, maker, curator, educator, writer or other.
- Support participants in producing a deliverable 'capstone' outcome of their creative practice that articulates key elements of that practice to a wider audience.

Programme Exit Awards

A range of Exit awards have been designed into each offering to reflect diverse learner needs. The programme actively facilitates mobility within the college and across the Creative Futures Academy and provides articulation into a variety of postgraduate programmes and career pathways.

- Completion of 5 credits = Exit Award: Professional Certificate in Circular by Design
- Completion of 20 credits = Exit Award: Professional Diploma in Circular by Design
- Completion of 30 credits = Exit Award: Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design
- Completion of 60 credits = Final Award: Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design

2. Programme Outcomes

The programme views its students as active participants in their learning journey.

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

1. Critically evaluate and engage with contemporary debates within the field of circular design, demonstrating an understanding of creative practices, frameworks, and interdisciplinary applications.
2. Demonstrate an ability to communicate and dissemination circular by design solutions, systems and strategies through a transparent, iterative process that demonstrates strategic decision-making and synthesis of complex information.
3. Advocate for and influence sustainable practices to engage stakeholders in the transition toward circular models.
4. Position circular design thinking within a professional context, critically considering and responding to emerging challenges through reflection, collaboration and innovative practice.

Graduate Attributes and Characteristics

The programme has been informed by the development of a creative attributes framework in collaboration with representatives from across Ireland's creative industry and sector.

The collaborative research identified the need to incubate and support CHANGE MAKERS who hold the vision to imagine futures that have not yet been created, and the agency to give expression and shape to new kinds of solutions.

Creative Futures graduates actively address identified CFA attributes and characteristics which can be outlined as:

- **Thinking** - Seeking to know more, to understand; to be clear on the options we have, the choices we make, and the decisions we take. Graduates will be responsible, reflexive and curious.
- **Exploring** - Investing in imagining, the appetite to discover, the openness to learn, the self-belief to go further. Graduates will be playful, agile and resilient.
- **Connecting** - Confidence and readiness to show and share, to create networks and sustain connections with people, practice and with the world around us. Graduates will be empathetic, collaborative and make their practice, research and thinking public.
- **Doing** - Working hard to make things happen for ourselves and for others. Graduates will be skilful, rigorous, and persistent.

3. Stage Outcomes

The following stage outcomes provide a summative scaffold that enriches student's learning through the programme.

Professional Certificate in Circular by Design

On successful completion of 5 credits of the programme, students will be able to:

- Develop an appropriate professional knowledge of the context, defining features and methods of their creative specialism.

Professional Diploma in Circular by Design

On successful completion of 20 credits of the programme, students will also be able to:

- Extend their ability to critically analyse, evaluate and develop concepts applicable to complex creative opportunities, in specific professional and sectoral contexts.

Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design

On successful completion of 30 credits of the programme, students will also be able to:

- Develop an appropriate professional knowledge of the context, defining features and methods of their creative specialism.
- Extend their ability to critically analyse, evaluate and develop concepts applicable to complex creative opportunities, in specific professional and sectoral contexts.
- Present their creative process and project work in an appropriate professional manner using a variety of methods.

4. Admission Requirements

To be accepted into the programme, applicants must have completed an honours level 8 undergrad degree (achieving at least a 2:2) in a relevant and cognate discipline, or have an appropriate level of professional practice in the subject field or a related field.

Students can be accepted onto the programme without the academic entry requirements outlined above. In such cases, applicants will need to demonstrate equivalent and relevant experience and/or formal learning.

Students should apply to the programme with evidence of previous successful qualifications, statements of work-related achievement etc.

Students who have not been educated through English must show proof of achieving IELTS 6.5 (with a minimum of 6 in the writing section on the Academic Version) or an equivalent score in another accepted test.

5. Further Educational Opportunities

This programme provides a sound and strong basis for further education at MA level, in direct relation to contemporary creative practice and theory, and also within related fields.

The programme is also intended to provide a platform for doctoral study.

Careers and skills

The programme is designed to meet the needs of the creative sector within and beyond Ireland. As such the constituent awards explicitly address key requirements identified in extensive discussions and research undertaken with industry partners and representative bodies such as the Arts Council,

Design and Crafts Council of Ireland and Institute of Designers in Ireland, and findings from government and sectoral reports.

The programme seeks to provide the transversal and specialist skills to equip creative practitioners to work within existing career paths, while also forge new career and creative pathways and learning.

6. Teaching and Learning

Delivery

Delivered by academic staff and visiting faculty who are leading practitioners and researchers in their specialist fields, the curriculum is centred on contemporary creative practice and discourse.

The programme aims to enable students to develop a personal vocabulary for creative development and presentation founded on critical appraisal and research. Students' work is focused through tutorials and expert advice; reinforced by strong links with industry, cultural institutions and leading creative practitioners who help students to develop their professional skills to position themselves successfully within the creative arts and industries.

Learning

The programme encourages inter and trans-disciplinary activity across the range of creative disciplines encompassed within the suite of Design Futures programmes and shares elements of learning through collaborative projects and skill acquisition, while enabling students to develop a strong specific creative philosophy, research-led agenda and vocational focus.

The full-time academic staff team supplemented by specialist part-time lecturers and researchers support a rich learning and research environment, and supply the critical, disciplinary and technical expertise to support students to develop their practice and professional competencies.

The Circular by Design programme adopts a range of new delivery models that enhance the lecture, seminar and situated learning pedagogies. The curriculum has been informed by industry and sectoral needs, and subject to a co-creation model of development where possible.

Learning, teaching and assessment techniques include:

Studio tuition	Workshop tuition	Crit – one-to-one or group	Lectures
Seminars	Tutorials	Student projects	Fieldwork
Team teaching - group crits and project spaces		Technical instruction or demonstrations	
Group teaching and learning - studio and IT-related	Self-directed study - research and practice		Interdisciplinary activities - research methods
Practice-related learning experience		General coursework	
Assessment as a learning method - feedback on projects and modules			Student self-evaluation

7. Methods of Assessment

Aligned Assessment

Aligning the assessment to the learning outcomes - delivered through teaching and learning activities - students and staff can clearly identify what has been achieved as well as how and where improvement can be made.

An adaptive assessment approach will create a structured, fluidity of assessment and evaluation methods for each, that offers the learner what they are looking for whilst ensuring pedagogical rigour.

The transparency of the Aligned Assessment strategy demonstrates to a student where improvement may be made, what has been achieved and for staff, the role of feedback and evaluation processes.

Assessment Procedure

A transparent assessment procedure empowers the student to understand the assessment process and enables them to evaluate their own levels of achievement against explicit grades, goals and learning outcomes whilst appreciating how and where they might improve.

Individual components of the programme are assessed on a mark-allocation basis to provide students with clear feedback to promote self-evaluation and self-reflection in their own learning processes. Staff are experienced in delivering a range of assessment and evaluation in line with student construction of knowledge and demonstration of understanding.

The aim of the assessment procedure is to achieve the following objectives:

- Measure: Grade or recognise the level of the student's achievement in relation to the learning outcomes.
- Communicate: Assessments provide students with clear feedback to promote self-evaluation and self-reflection in their own learning processes.
- Illustrate: Learning outcomes and competencies that are required have been achieved, which allows for progression to the next level/course/step in the learning journey.

Assessment Methods

- Formative Assessment: typically involves feedback (oral or written) to students on their progress, and does not usually involve a mark. It is used to provide constructive feedback to improve learning and understanding. Formative assessment does not form part of the student's final grade or mark.
- Summative Assessment: these assessment results are aggregated and used to determine whether students have fulfilled the specified learning outcomes and have met the standard required to achieve a passing grade, and so can be granted the credits for successfully completing each module.

Learners will also undertake on-going self and peer evaluation, helping foster a culture reflective practice that empowers creative professionals on the programme.

Assessments are undertaken by a team of staff who are examining how students have met the learning outcomes. Assessment may occur or be required on or off campus or on line, and will be timetabled well in advance.

8. Programme Review and Evaluation

All programmes are subject to College-wide evaluation tools and events. The annual online student evaluation takes place in May or June, asking all College students to provide feedback. Results are sent to each School to respond to and report to Programmes Board on what changes or developments will be implemented in response to the evaluations.

Additionally, a student forum for each programme takes place each year. This is an opportunity to discuss any issues with students, staff and an external neutral person.

External Examiners contribute considerably to the quality review processes, assisting evaluation as well as assessment. In addition, informal feedback is gathered from discussions with students, staff and management.

About two-thirds of the way through the academic year, a student forum will be convened to gather students' comments about their study and the delivery of the programme. In addition, at the end of Trimester 2, students have the opportunity to complete an online evaluation of their study and experience at NCAD. These evaluation events are important to current and future students, to ensure we can enhance the delivery of programmes at NCAD.

NCAD students also participate in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, which takes place in the middle of Trimester 2. This international project measures students' engagement with their studies.

In addition, learners are invited to discuss their experience on the module with their lecturers at any point during the year. They can also relay their comments to the class student representative who will communicate their comments to the staff team.

This programme is delivered under the support of the Creative Futures Academy HCI pillar 1 funded project, which is subject to an annual evaluation. A major review of this programme will be carried out in 2026/27.

9. Modular Provision

Code & module title	Credits	Core, Option or Elective	Trimester
Stage 1: Professional Certificate in Circular by Design (5 credits)			
PGCFAD1020 Design Principles – Circular by Design	5	Core	1
Stage 2: Professional Diploma in Circular by Design (20 credits)			
PGCFAD1021 Design Practices 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	1
PGCFAD1022 Design Collaborations 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	1
PGCFAD1023 Design Capstone 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	2
Stage 3: Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design (30 credits)			
PGCFAD1024 Creative Research 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	2
PGCFAD1025 Design Capstone 2 - Circular by Design	5	Core	2
Stage 4: Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design (60 credits)			
Creative Elective ²	5	Elective	3
PGCFAD1026 Creative Insights 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	3
PGCFAD1027 Design Connections 1 - Circular by Design	5	Core	3
PGCFAD1028 Design Practices 2 - Circular by Design	5	Core	4
PGCFAD1029 Creative Research 2 - Circular by Design	5	Core	4
PGCFAD1030 Design Capstone 3 - Circular by Design	5	Core	4

Trimester 1

PGCFAD1020 Design Principles – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module introduces learners to fundamental principles, working methods, skills and theories that underpin contemporary creative practice in circular design. This module will focus on the theoretical underpinnings, contemporary issues, topics and concepts relating to the diverse field of Communication Design. Introducing learners to the fundamental principles and processes of the discipline, and enabling them to approach creative work from a theoretically informed perspective.

PGCFAD1021 Design Practices 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module enables learners to undertake a body of work within their chosen creative specialism, supporting their personal and professional development as a circular designer.

PGCFAD1022 Design Collaborations 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module introduces learners to methods and techniques that will help you to navigate the evolving creative landscape, identify opportunities and collaborate to address creative challenges.

Learners will undertake a thematic project with colleagues and creative peers, and develop work through teamwork, negotiation and collaboration.

² A CFA elective module offered by another NCAD programme, or from our CFA partners at IADT and UCD

Trimester 2

PGCFAD1023 Design Capstone 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This capstone module enables learners to undertake a project that demonstrates their fundamental knowledge of circular design practices and theories. Learners will reflect upon, document and disseminate their creative practice.

PGCFAD1024 Creative Research 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module introduces a range of core research methods in art and design. It aims to assist learners in the conception, development, documentation, delivery and reporting of creative projects and related research activity. While the emphasis is on providing learners with a useful toolkit of research methods and set of exemplars with application to both their practice and critical work, the module also addresses a broader set of concerns related to the distinctive nature of research in art and design.

PGCFAD1025 Design Capstone 2 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This capstone module enables learners to undertake a project that demonstrates their ability to synthesise the knowledge and skills appropriate to their chosen creative discipline.

Trimester 3

Creative Elective – 5 credits

The programme facilitates inter and intra institutional mobility through the Creative Futures Academy (CFA) partnership, enabling Graduate Diploma Circular by Design students to undertake a 5 credit CFA elective module offered by another NCAD programme, or from our CFA partners at IADT and UCD.

PGCFAD1026 Creative Insights 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module draws on the experiences, insight and critical thinking of leading practitioners and theorists. It provides a framework in which expert artists, designers, critics, writers and creative professionals can share their professional experience with learners.

PGCFAD1027 Design Connections 1 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module enables learners to work on real-world projects. These can take the form of live commercial, social and cultural projects with sectoral and/or industry partners.

Trimester 4

PGCFAD1028 Design Practices 2 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

This module enables learners to undertake an advanced body of work within their chosen creative specialism, supporting their personal and professional development as a designer or maker.

PGCFAD1029 Creative Research 2 – Circular by Design: 5 credits

In this module learners will be introduced to creative research methods appropriate to Circular Design. Learners will apply these methods to creatively inform and underpin their creative practice. Addressing specific research methods appropriate for Circular Design and with an emphasis on applied research, students will learn to translate research findings into actionable creative propositions.

PGCFAD1030 Design Capstone 3 – Creative by Design: 5 credits

This capstone module enables learners to develop the in-depth knowledge and skills appropriate to Circular Design by responding to a thematic agenda. Learners will be encouraged to develop and demonstrate an integrated iterative creative process that incorporates creating, evaluating, presenting and reflecting.

10. Programme Structure

Stage 1: Professional Certificate in Circular by Design	
Trimester 1	
PGCFAD1020 Design Principles – Circular by Design 5 Credits	

On successful completion of Stage 1 (5 credits) students can exit with a Professional Certificate in Circular by Design, or progress onto Stage 2 of the Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design programme.

Stage 2: Professional Diploma in Circular by Design		
Trimester 1		
PGCFAD1021 Design Practices 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	PGCFAD1022 Design Collaborations 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	
Trimester 2		
PGCFAD1023 Design Capstone 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits		

On successful completion of Stage 2 (20 credits) students can exit with a Professional Diploma in Circular by Design or progress onto Stage 3 of the Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design programme.

Stage 3: Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design		
Trimester 2		
PGCFAD1024 Creative Research 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	PGCFAD1025 Design Capstone 2 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	

On successful completion of Stage 3 (30 credits) students can exit with a Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design, or progress onto Stage 4 of the Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design programme.

Stage 4: Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design		
Trimester 3		
Creative Elective ³ 5 Credits	PGCFAD1026 Creative Insights 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	PGCFAD1027 Design Connections 1 - Circular by Design 5 Credits
Trimester 4		
PGCFAD1028 Design Practices 2 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	PGCFAD1029 Creative Research 2 - Circular by Design 5 Credits	PGCFAD1030 Design Capstone 3 - Circular by Design 5 Credits

On successful completion of Stage 4 (an accumulation of 60 credits) students will exit with a Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design or progress onto Stage 5 of the MA in Circular by Design programme.

Module Availability and Scheduling

All modules will be scheduled according to resource and spatial capacity. Optional modules will be offered subject to a minimum viable cohort size. Learners will be informed of the options available to them in advance, and choices will be supported through discussion with personal and pathway tutor.

11.Exit Points and Credit Requirements

Professional Certificate in Circular by Design (exit only)

Completion of 5 credits: 100 hours of student effort

Professional Diploma in Circular by Design (exit only)

Completion of 20 credits: 400 hours of student effort

Graduate Certificate in Circular by Design (exit only)

Completion of 30 credits: 600 hours of student effort

Graduate Diploma in Circular by Design

Completion of 60 credits: 1200 hours of student effort.

The final award is calculated using credit from all modules.

12.Resources

Staffing

Name	Title/Role
Programme Co-ordinator, Module Co-ordinators	
Jessica Hayden	Programme Co-ordinator

³ A CFA module offered by another NCAD programme, or from our CFA partners at IADT and UCD

School of Design Staff	Lecturers and facilitators
Administrative Staff	
School of Design administrators CFA administrators	Programme administration
Technical Support Staff	
School of Design Staff	Programme technical staff

Space

The programme will be based within existing college studios, workshops and other spaces across the calendar year, while also availing of external spaces where appropriate for on location or work-based learning.

Facilities

The programme will utilise existing college facilities, while also using new facilities such as the William Walsh Workshop and VLE provided through CFA funding. Access to facilities across the CFA partners will be available subject to nature and availability.

**For further information on this programme,
contact CFA Administrator, Joanna Crawley: crawleyj@staff.ncad.ie**