MA Communication Design
MA Design for Body & Environment
MA Product Design

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

Programme title	MA Communication Design MA Design for Body & Environment MA Product Design	**School**	School of Design
Resulting awards	MA Communication Design MA Design for Body & Environment MA Product Design	**Head of School**	Professor Alex Milton
Level	Level 9	**ECTS credits[1]**	90 or 120, depending on exit award
University award	Taught Master's Degree	**Programme type**	Fulltime postgraduate Master's programme
Programme Co-ordinator	John Paul Dowling Angela O'Kelly Sam Russell	**External Examiner**	TBC
Programme team	School of Design and School of Visual Culture staff		

1. Programme Aims and Objectives

The Masters in Communication Design, Design for Body & Environment and Product Design each seek to provide a scholarly framework for students who wish to master their specific design discipline in a studio setting by proposing and undertaking a research project. The programme is constructed from a set of common modules that provide a structural foundation for design research and practice within a number of distinct design disciplines. The programme draws upon the expertise of leading design practitioners and academics, with students undertaking a significant body of design research through practice.

The programme is designed, timetabled and delivered in such a way as to enable design practitioners to undertake their study alongside maintaining their professional career.

Disciplinary Pathways
The MA programme has a series of disciplinary pathways which lead to distinct disciplinary awards:

Communication Design
Communication Design uses a variety of media to creatively communicate ideas and concepts that can inform, challenge, educate and transform lives. The field of communication is rapidly evolving, and students are encouraged to develop the critical, creative and technical excellence needed to succeed

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within contemporary graphic design, illustration and moving image, and discover new possibilities and creative practices.

Design for Body and Environment
Design for Body and Environment covers a broad range of design disciplines, from fashion to textiles, and jewellery to accessories. Students are encouraged to examine the past and challenge the present, and develop ideas that address and challenge industry, social, cultural and political agendas.

Product Design
Product Design is about enriching quality of life, whether in the home, workplace, or public domain. It can provide ways of answering unmet needs, improving function and appearance, or offer new ways of critically engaging with objects and experiences. The master's programme addresses real-world challenges through balancing creativity and technical capability with contextual insight and empathy for people, enabling them to make things better.

Students successfully completing their MA are able to continue their studies by undertaking a further trimester of work and graduate with an additional qualification of a Graduate Certificate in *Design Enterprise* or in *Design Research & Development.*

Aims and Objectives of the Programme
The suite of research masters in Design within the School of Design have been designed to enable creative practitioners to place their work in an academic and professional context.

The studio based suite of design research masters complement the one year specialist masters offered by the school (the MSc Medical Devices, MA Interaction Design and the MA Service Design), and provides a framework for synergy and interaction between undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research activities both within the School of Design and between design and other masters provision across NCAD, in fine art, visual culture and education.

It is also explicitly designed to enable graduates from other colleges nationally and internationally to articulate into the programme, and complete or undertake their studies at NCAD.

The programme pathways share generic aims and a common structure. This provides a coherent structure for the organisation, delivery and assessment of the programme while also allowing each pathway to retain its own specialist practices, methods and competencies, and lead to a distinct disciplinary award.

Within a shared modular structure, students will undertake projects that share core content with specialist tutorial and studio provision.

The programme aims to build synergies within and beyond the school, developing a critical mass of postgraduate design students and ensuring viable cohort sizes and sustainable communities of practice.

The programme seeks to create 'T' shaped designers capable of making a significant contribution to contemporary design practice, with the vertical bar on the 'T' representing the depth of related skills and expertise in a single field, whereas the horizontal bar is the ability to collaborate across disciplines with experts in other areas and to apply knowledge in areas of expertise other than one's own.

The programme aims to offer students the opportunity to develop their practice through a programme that enhances their skills and knowledge base and facilitates critical engagement with the field of design.

Postgraduate students will access methods, ideas, critical processes and approaches, share their learning and professional development with peers, and interact with leading design practitioners via intensive workshops and mentoring arrangements.

The core remit of NCAD is the education of practitioners across fine art, design, education and critical thinking across visual arts. This commitment to actual practice and its critical contexts is central to the research ethos of the College. The MA provision has been designed to link to our areas of professional expertise and research specialism within the College, and to our current and future research priorities.

Programme Aims

The Master of Arts in Communication Design, Design for Body & Environment and Product Design provide a scholarly framework for students who wish to develop their design practice through a research led programme of study. A major objective of the suite of research led masters is to provide an environment that is broad, yet with enough rigour and focus to enable students to engage with the challenges of contemporary creative practice. The programme encourages students across a range of design disciplines to integrate research, creative practice and contemporary cultural theory.

The programme pathways share a common structure. The modules seek to prepare students, from the broadest range of undergraduate backgrounds, with the practical and theoretical means to develop contemporary design practice and theory within a specialist discipline, while benefitting from a broader interdisciplinary design discourse and student cohort.

Successive modules allow students to develop their specialist practice, their professional, technical and organisational skills and their knowledge and application of critical contexts. The postgraduate programme provides a scholarly framework for students who wish to develop their design practice. A major objective of the programme is to provide an environment that is broad, yet with enough rigour and focus to enable students to engage with the challenges of contemporary creative practice. The programme encourages students across a range of design disciplines to integrate research, creative practice and contemporary cultural theory.

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The programme seeks:

- to improve the exploration, curiosity, ambition, depth and breadth of creative design practice in a systematic and insightful manner;

- to continually meet the rapidly changing needs, expectations, aspirations and experiences of today's graduate students by improving their professional application as designers;

- to allow the student to demonstrate the ability to learn and perform at masters level;

- to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of the history, principles and practice of design;

- to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of the design process;

- to develop the students understanding of the user and to equip them with the practical skills for identifying user needs, behaviours and values;

- to develop the student's skills in primary and secondary research and the translation of findings into their practical work;

- to support the student in the development of a range of practical design skills at a postgraduate level;

- to provide students with methodologies and techniques that can be applied to the design, development, prototyping and evaluation of products and services;

- to enable students to conceptualise and review their creative process and take incisive control over the direction of their practice as designers;

- to critically evaluate and employ contemporary debates regarding practice-based research, practice-led research and cognate creative methodologies;

- to provide students with requisite knowledge and research skills to creatively contextualise their practice and imaginatively demonstrate its wider validity;

- to equip the student with the capability to critically evaluate and engage with contemporary debates regarding the social, cultural, economic and political affordances and impacts of design;

- to develop the student's theoretical knowledge and design skills to prepare them for further study;

- to provide students with industry connections through sponsored projects and visiting faculty.

2. Programme Outcomes

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

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the broad field of Design and mastery of key debates of their chosen discipline.

- Apply knowledge and understanding through written, spoken and visual communication enabling the application of theoretical knowledge of Design to new aspects of contemporary practice.

- Make judgements through traditional academic practice, display a mastery of a broad range of theoretical positions, their histories, strengths and weaknesses.

- Communications and working skills - an ability to work in both a self-directed manner and within a team approach in order to establish complex solutions for the imaginative delivery of Design today to various audiences.

- Learning skills – demonstrate the successful acquisition of a range of independent learning competencies including a range of research based and professional skills which might assist the student in their transition to doctoral studies or the world of work.

Stage Outcomes

On successful completion of Semester 1 of the programme, students will be able to:

- Propose and justify an appropriate self-directed research project;

- Develop a mature knowledge of the context, defining features and methods of their design discipline;

- Extend their ability to critically analyse, evaluate and develop concepts applicable to complex design problems and opportunities, in specific contexts;

- Present their design process and project work in an appropriate professional manner using a variety of methods;

- Critically reflect on their practice within a wider context and understand a range of research methods and communication styles appropriate for a self-directed master's research project.

On successful completion of Semester 2 of the programme, students will be able to:

- Evidence their personal methodologies drawn from their prior learning to create mature design proposals;

- Demonstrate their entrepreneurial, interpersonal and professional skills in their chosen field of design.

- Identify and research, interpret and critically evaluate recent movements in design.

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

- Complete a body of creative design practice to professional standards.

- Design and install an advanced level display of their work featuring aspects of their creative practice.

- Present a postgraduate level portfolio of their creative practice.

- Complete a written Design Rationale report that creatively contextualises this body of practice and its genesis

- Demonstrate that they have significantly developed their professional practice as designers to postgraduate level.

On completion of the MA and additional optional 30 credits students will be able to:

- develop a viable business plan and funding proposal/s

  or

- undertake research and develop funding proposal/s.

3. Admission Requirements

- Honours degree award of 2.2 or higher, or an equivalent academic or professional qualification in art, design or a related discipline (prior learning and experience will also be considered)

- A portfolio of work (this may not necessarily be design work but must demonstrate experience in a relevant field)

- 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.

- Given the research led nature of the programme it is best suited to applicants who have spent a minimum of 2 years in professional practice.

- The programme has been designed to enable students to continue in their professional practice while undertaking the masters through flexible modes of learning and teaching.

4. Further Educational Opportunities

It is intended that some graduates will choose to remain in the college progressing to PhD level. The programme aims to contribute to the development of the research culture of the college by expanding the scope of expertise in design and by providing a pathway into further research specialisation in the field of design. By supporting the academic development of students there is scope for the development of a research cluster, which will explore a wide range of topics in the field through both theoretical and practice-based research.

5. Teaching and Learning Methodologies

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

The studio and workshop, supported by technological provision, is the focus of learning and teaching within the MA programme. The application of service design processes and the development of ideas through design iteration, defines the programme's vision. The postgraduate programme aims to enable students to develop a personal vocabulary for creative development and presentation founded on critical appraisal and research. Students' design work is focused through tutorials and expert advice; reinforced by strong links with industry and leading practitioners who help students to develop their entrepreneurial, interpersonal and professional skills to position themselves successfully within the creative industries.

Design studio activities are supported by Visual Culture staff delivering theoretical input, interacting to promote masters level learning and teaching. The MA encourages interdisciplinary activity between a range of design disciplines and shares elements of learning through collaborative projects and skill acquisition, while enabling students to develop a strong specific service design 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.

6. Methods of Assessment

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies include:

- Studio tuition

- Lectures

- Seminars

- Tutorials

- Team Teaching - Group Crits and Project Spaces

- Student Projects

- Technical Instruction/ Demonstrations

- Group Teaching and Learning - Studio and IT related

- Self-Directed Study - Research and practice

- Interdisciplinary Activities - Research Methods

- Study Trips

- Practice-Related Learning Experience

- Placement/Internship Opportunities

- General Coursework

- Crit - One to one or group

- Assessment as a Learning Method - Feedback on projects and modules

- Student Self-evaluation

7. Programme Review and Evaluation

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at NCAD. We encourage all students to communicate their concerns and their observations about their study to members of staff so that any changes can be made in a timely manner.

About two-thirds of the way through the semester, 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 Semester 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, you are invited to discuss your experience on the module with your lecturers at any point during the year. You can also relay your comments to the class student representative who will communicate your comments to the staff.

A major review of this programme will be carried out in accordance with the College review cycle schedule.

8. Modular Provision

Students undertake a number of core modules, and have the opportunity to choose from a range of optional modules.

Year 1

Autumn Trimester

Design Research through Practice - 15 credits CORE
This module will support you to define, collect and analyse a personally selected and justified area of practice-based research that is innovative and critically aware. You will produce a cohesive and mature body of research work within studio practice that will act as the foundation for your master's study.

Collaborative Design Studio – 10 credits CORE
This module introduces you to the professional, philosophical and creative issues facing contemporary design and society as a whole. You will undertake a thematic design research project with colleagues, and develop a project through contextual research and development, negotiation and radical collaboration.

An Introduction to Research Methods - 5 credits CORE
This module begins by provides an introduction to a range of core research methods. It aims to assist you in the conception, development, documentation, delivery and reporting of both your major creative projects and your dissertation activity. Through a series of lectures and workshops you will explore, adopt and use a range of research methods appropriate for your studio practice. You will learn a variety of methods for data collection, interpretation and presentation. With an emphasis on applied research, you will learn to translate research findings into actionable design propositions and solutions.

Spring Trimester

Design Development – 10 credits CORE
In this module you are required to develop a substantial and coherent body of work that demonstrates your understanding of your own practice and career aspirations based upon the proposal generated in Design Research through Practice. The proposal should enable you to demonstrate the application of a personal design methodology. This self-directed study will sustain the workload throughout this module and can be demonstrated in one major piece of work or several shorter pieces that are united by a common theme. Either way, your work should combine theory and practice that results in a critical body of work for assessment. Subject matter, mode of delivery, potential outcomes, audience and context are for you to identify. In the initial stages, negotiations will take place with your tutor to confirm that your proposal will allow you to fulfil the learning outcomes of the module.

Design for Change - 5 credits CORE
This module will enable you to explore the capacity of design as a critical and collaborative agent of social, cultural and economic change. It also seeks to position design as a creative forum for exploring a dynamic, changing world full of critical, contradictory and provocative ideas. The module considers the potential impact of design on a range of specific topics including human behaviour, societal change and international development. Through a series of lectures and group tutorials students will examine the role of the designer in the 21st century in relation to these broad issues. You will develop and present your own

'Design for Change' concepts and engage with a combination of faculty, industry and external stakeholders in the development and delivery of your project.

Author & Audience - 5 credits CORE

This module will enable you to become familiar with key concepts in design theory, and to communicate effectively about the context of your personal practice and your proposed major project. A core design skill is being able to describe users, motivations, actions and reactions, obstacles, successes and imagine and convey scenarios, and this module is intended to facilitate critical reading and writing in a number of modes. The module will help hone your writing for design skills, from design fiction to technical writing, and copyrighting to developing content for new media platforms.

Design Studio, Major Project Proposal - 10 credits CORE

You will initiate and state a design project of your choice (by negotiation with your tutor/s) which will encompass: information retrieval, collation and interpretation. The module will develop your ability to understand how to find scholarly and professional literature on the topic that interests you, and relate that literature to your research question. Your goal is to describe what is already known about your topic, how it has been researched by others, and how your question and the research methods you seek to employ different methods from that of previous design researchers. This will then enable you to develop a feasibility study where through a process of analysis and evaluation of a proposed project you will determine if it is required, appropriate and feasible.

Summer Trimester (OPTIONAL)

Design Industry Internship – 30 credits OPTION

The aim of this module is to provide postgraduate design students at NCAD with the opportunity to apply the subject specific design skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as personal transferable skills, acquired in the programme, to the real world environment of work. You will undertake a work placement and agreed programme of part-time or full time work within a vetted industry partner, equivalent to 400 hours of work based learning. You will follow an agreed learning plan in order to receive meaningful, study-related work experience, which will be of significant advantage to you when seeking employment and/or developing your own business. You will record your experience in both a logbook, placement report and a reflective journal, and your performance at work, will be assessed by your respective in-placement company supervisor via an evaluation form.

Year 2
Autumn Trimester

Design Studio, Major Project - 20 credits CORE

During this module you will work on a self-selected and generated major project, which offer the opportunity to undertake a wide-ranging and in-depth practical and theoretical investigation into your chosen field of practice. Students will be supported to execute projects from both a pragmatic and speculative perspective.

Design Rationale - 5 credits CORE

This module will enable you to reflect on your personal practice and your major project. You will record and communicate the argumentation and reasoning behind your design process, the reasons behind decisions made, your justification, other alternatives considered, the trade-offs evaluated, and the

rationale that led to the decision. You will create a reflective learning journal and consider what you have learnt during your studies and how this may affect your design practice in the future.

Design Presentation - 5 credits CORE
The culmination of the programme, this module will enable you to demonstrate your ability to prepare and present your work in a variety of contexts and formats both for the purposes of assessment and for the wider dissemination and promotion of your practice to peers, public and a professional audience.

Spring Trimester (OPTIONAL)

Design Incubation and Enterprise – 30 credits OPTION
This optional module provides you with the opportunity to develop your creative work and designs further within the NCAD Origin8 incubator, helping you to develop a viable business plan and funding proposal/s. The module aims to support the commercialisation of student's design work, and draws upon the institutions strategic research and knowledge exchange activities. Students undertake an agreed programme of design practice, working with researchers and external partners, clients and funding bodies.

Or

Design Research & Innovation – 30 credits OPTION
This optional module provides you with the opportunity to develop your creative work and designs further within an NCAD Research Cluster, helping you to undertake research and develop funding proposal/s. The module aims to support the research development of student's design work, and draws upon the institutions strategic research and knowledge exchange activities. Students undertake an agreed programme of design research, working with researchers and external partners, clients and funding bodies.

9. Programme Structure

Year 1: Autumn Trimester

DESPG2-2 Design Research through Practice (C) 15 credits	Code TBC Collaborative Design Studio (C) 10 credits	Code TBC An Introduction to Research Methods (C) 5 credits

Year 1: Spring Trimester

MFAD1-9 Design for Change 5 credits (C)	DES2-6 Design Development (C) 10 credits	MFAD2-4 Design Studio: Major Project Proposal (C) 10 credits	MFAD2-3 Author & Audience (C) 5 credits

Year 1: Summer Trimester (Option)

Design Industry Internship 30 credits

Year 2: Autumn Trimester

Design Studio: Major Project 20 credits	MFAD2-5 Design Rationale (C) 5 credits	Design Presentation 5 credits

Year 2: Spring Trimester (Option)

Design Incubation & Enterprise 30 credits
OR
Design Research & Innovation 30 credits

10. Exit Points and Credit Requirements

Trimester 1
Completion of 30 credits
Exit award: Graduate Certificate

Trimester 2
Completion of 60 credits
Exit award: Graduate Diploma

Trimesters 3 & 4
Completion of 90 or 120 (in Trimester 4) credits
Exit award: *MA Communication Design* or *MA Design for Body and Environment* or *MA Product Design*

Trimester 5 (Optional)
Exit award with *Graduate Certificate in Design Enterprise* or *Graduate Certificate in Design Research & Innovation*

11. Final Award Calculation

The final award is calculated using credit from all the modules.

12. Resources

Staffing

	Name	Role
Teaching Staff	Head of Department School of Design Staff School of Visual Culture Staff	Programme Co-ordinators Teaching Teaching
Administrative Staff	David Bramley	School Administrator
Technical Support Staff	School of Design Staff	Technical support

Space

MA Design Studio and School of Design studios and workshops

Facilities

Existing School of Design Facilities

For further information on this programme contact Alex Milton miltona@staff.ncad.ie