

Professional Diploma in Service Design

AD431PD

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

Programme title	Professional Diploma in Service Design	School	School of Design
Resulting awards	Professional Diploma in Service Design Professional Certificate in Service Design	Head of School	Alex Milton
Level	Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications	ECTS credits¹	20 credits
University award	Professional Certificate (Special Purpose) and Professional Diploma (Special Purpose) postgraduate awards	Programme type	Postgraduate programme delivered flexibly
Programme Co-ordinator	Caoimhe McMahon	External Examiner	TBC
Programme team	NCAD staff team (Co-ordinators, Lecturers and Technical Officers)		

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

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 Professional Diploma in Service Design programme seeks to enable creative practitioners to:

- Enhance their expertise in an existing practice, to upskill, reskill or refocus their professional direction.
- Immerse themselves in contemporary critical thinking, and to be part of the vanguard, shaping new design futures.
- Form a diverse and vibrant peer network of fellow Creative Futures Academy learners and connect to networks and communities of practice through sectoral and industry partnerships and collaborations.
- Shape their learning to suit their availability, needs and ambitions by selecting from a range of in-person, online and blended (a mix of online and in-person) learning options.

As one in a suite of programmes that make up the Design Futures offer at NCAD, the Professional Diploma in Service Design seeks to provide a scholarly framework for students who wish to study specific, connected aspects of creative disciplines and themes within a leading art and design college setting. Many aspects of the suite of programmes will be delivered in collaboration with partners from the Creative Sector and in addition, a number of programme sessions will have a public dimension, allowing us to invite other interested parties from the fields of contemporary design practice and scholarship to join our conversations and creative activities.

The CFA will build extended networks for programme participants beyond the immediate peer community, helping forge a community of practice within and beyond the Creative Futures Academy.

Vision

The core remit of NCAD is the education of practitioners across design, contemporary art practice, cultural production and creative education. This commitment to actual practice and its critical contexts is central to the research ethos of the College. This programme and its constituent awards have been designed to link to our areas of professional expertise and research specialism within the College, to our current and future research priorities. The programme has been informed by detailed consultation with members of the Industry Council, the CFA body of creative industry representatives whose detailed understanding of the current and future needs of the sector are an invaluable resource for the development of the CFA programme.

Like other CFA Design Futures programmes, the Professional Diploma in Service Design programme seeks to create 'T' shaped practitioners capable of making a significant contribution to contemporary creative practice and discourse, with the vertical bar on the 'T' representing the depth of related skills and expertise in a single field, and the horizontal bar, the ability to collaborate across disciplines with experts in other areas and to apply knowledge in areas of expertise other than one's own.

As part of the Creative Futures suite of programmes, the Professional Diploma in Service Design has been designed to address the following CFA delivery pillars:

- **FUTURE PRACTICE** - Equip learners with the concrete and transversal skills needed to maintain practices.
- **FUTURE THINKING** - Produce inquisitive creative sector professionals capable of approaching complex problems imaginatively and employing current processes and technologies.
- **FUTURE BUSINESS** - Provide learners with the tools and skills to identify and take opportunities or to go out and build their own. Key values will include collaboration, agility and resilience.
- **FUTURE SOCIETY** - Equip learners with the skills, methods and tools to be able to harness the potential of creative practice to address the social and cultural challenges of the future.
- **FUTURE COMMUNITIES** - Create a vibrant transdisciplinary community of practice as a setting where new practices can be imagined and tested.
- **FUTURE CONTENT** - Prepare learners to work with emerging media and modes of dissemination.
- **FUTURE LEARNING** - Develop and apply contemporary, best practice approaches to teaching and learning specifically tailored for the applied, distinctive needs of the creative and cultural sectors.

The suite of Design Futures programmes complements and point toward our existing specialist masters provision. They are designed to provide flexible and adaptable learning experiences which appeal to life-wide and life-long learners. The programmes are designed, structured and delivered to enable creative practitioners to undertake learning alongside maintaining their professional career or practice. Learners can complete part-time programmes, to suit their pace and needs - accelerating or slowing down their accumulation of modules and credits to meet evolving professional and personal circumstances

The suite of Design Futures programmes shares a common modular structure which facilitates a diverse range of professional development needs across contemporary creative practice and discourse. The Design Futures programmes at NCAD act as a valuable incubation and development platform for learners to design, enhance, immerse, connect and shape their professional and creative practice.

Opportunity Creation

From their entry-point on their Creative Futures Academy journey, learners are encouraged to consider their own 'practice' needs and relate this to the range of programmes and scales of learning available. The suite of Design Futures programmes provides a professional scaffold that supports the development of specialist and transversal skills enabling participants to extend or change their design practice.

Successive and elective modules allow students to develop their practice, their professional, technical and organisational skills and their knowledge and application of critical contexts. As the suite of Design Futures programmes develops, elective modules will be available to students from

CFA partners, IADT and UCD, providing a unique agile and evolving range of disciplinary and thematic awards within creative arts education in Ireland.

Values

The Creative Futures Academy (CFA) is a space for creative practitioners to learn, to network and to allow new ideas to influence and to shape our future.

The CFA values focus on:

- Creativity and imagination as agents of positive change
- Providing access to relevant learning to creative practitioners throughout their careers
- Connecting communities of practice
- Instilling confidence and leadership
- Sharing knowledge and expertise for the enhancement of practitioners, educators and the cultural & creative sector as a whole.
- Encouraging divergence and risk-taking
- Embedding sustainability in creative practice

Service Design Programme & Awards

Service designers create solutions for complex systemic and societal challenges, developing experiences that address the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders. The Professional Diploma teaches the application of design methods, tools and thinking to sectors such as healthcare, technology, finance, transportation and education. The programme seeks to empower students from fields such as design, business, sociology, systems thinking, education, banking, technology and the public sector to shape the services of the future through design thinking and doing. The global service economy is growing rapidly and accounts for more than 70% employment in all OECD countries, presenting exciting possibilities for design. Through a series of live projects, students will engage with complex economic, technological, political and social issues, creating new service solutions that revolutionise everyday experiences.

Service Design is increasingly recognised as a vital skillset to help address the challenges of the new experience economy, and the course seeks to meet the new demands of industry and wider society. Projects, activities and workshops will expand on methods and principles from human-centred design and design thinking, applying these to the development and delivery of new consumer and public services, transforming user experiences.

Programme Aims

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

The modules seek to prepare students 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.
- **BUILD** sustainable communities of interest that grow without discipline.
- **INCUBATE** agile creative practitioners, businesses and organisations that can change the social, cultural and economic worlds.
- **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.
- **ENGAGE** with emerging technology, tools and practices to create continual change in the creative sector.

The programme aims to:

- Provide participants with appropriate skills and knowledge that can be applied to their professional development as a creative practitioner.
- Develop participant's knowledge and skills to prepare them for further life-long learning.
- Assist participants in developing their own practice in relation to contemporary creative practice and discourse.

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 the module Design Principles – Service Design (5 credits) = Exit Award: Professional Certificate in Service Design
- Completion of all four modules (20 credits) = Exit Award: Professional Diploma in Service 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:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contemporary creative practice within their chosen specialism.
- Apply knowledge and understanding through written, spoken and visual communication enabling the application of theoretical knowledge of their creative specialism to new aspects of contemporary practice.

- Demonstrate an ability to establish solutions for the imaginative delivery of creative practice today to an audience.

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

Professional Certificate in Service Design

On successful completion of the Professional Certificate in Service Design, students will be able to:

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

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.

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 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 Fashion Communication programme adopts a range of new delivery models that enhance the traditional studio, workshop, 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	Lectures	Tutorials
Crit - One to one or group		Seminars	Fieldwork
Team Teaching - Group Crits and Project Spaces		Student Projects	
Technical Instruction/ Demonstrations		Student Self-evaluation	
Group Teaching and Learning - Studio and IT related			
Self-Directed Study - Research and practice		Interdisciplinary Activities - Research Methods	
General Coursework		Practice-Related Learning Experience	
Assessment as a Learning Method - Feedback on projects and modules			

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.

To be relevant to the range of courses offered within this programme - from Professional Cert to Professional Diploma - delivered as long & skinny, short & fat, micro experiences, intensive experiences, intervals, on-demand etc.- assessment will align to suit the needs of both the learner and the course. 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.

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

Professional Certificate in Service Design

Module	Credits	Core or Option	Trimester
PGCFAD1005 Design Principles – Service Design	5	Core	1

Professional Diploma in Service Design

Module	Credits	Core or Option	Trimester
PGCFAD1005 Design Principles – Service Design	5	Core	1
PGCFAD1006 Design Collaborations 1 – Service Design	5	Core	1
PGCFAD1007 Design Practices 1 – Service Design	5	Core	2
PGCFAD1008 Design Capstone 1 – Service Design	5	Core	2

Trimester 1

PGCFAD1005 Design Principles - Service Design (5 credits)

This module introduces learners to fundamental principles, working methods, skills and theories that underpin contemporary creative practice in Service Design. This module focuses on the theoretical underpinnings, contemporary issues, topics and concepts relating to Service Design, introducing learners to the fundamental principles and processes of the discipline, and enabling them to approach creative work from a theoretically informed perspective.

PGCFAD1006 Design Collaborations 1 - Service Design (5 credits)

This module introduces learners to methods and techniques that will help them to navigate the evolving creative landscape, identify opportunities and collaborate to address creative challenges. Learners undertake a thematic project with colleagues and creative peers, and develop work through teamwork, negotiation and collaboration.

Trimester 2

PGCFAD1007 Design Practices 1 - Service 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 service designer.

PGCFAD1008 Design Capstone 1 - Service Design (5 credits)

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

10. Programme Structure

Professional Certificate in Service Design

Trimester 1	
Design Principles – Service Design 5 Credits	

Professional Diploma in Service Design

Trimester 1		
Design Principles – Service Design 5 Credits	Design Collaborations 1 - Service Design 5 Credits	
Trimester 2		
Design Practices 1 – Service Design 5 Credits	Design Capstone 1 – Service Design 5 Credits	

11. Exit Points and Credit Requirements

On completion of Design Principles – Service Design (5 credits) students can exit the programme and will qualify to apply for the Professional Certificate in Service Design (5 credits).

Students progressing to successfully complete all four modules of the programme (total 20 credits), students will qualify to apply for the Professional Diploma in Service Design (20 credits).

Final Award Calculation

The grades awarded for each of all four modules will be used to calculate the grade for the final award.

The [NCAD Grade Descriptors](#) are used for all grading on this programme.

12. Resources

Staffing

Name	Title/Role
Teaching Staff	
Caoimhe McMahon	Programme Leader
Administrative Staff	
School of Design and CFA staff	Programme administration
Technical Support Staff	
School of Design technical staff	Technical support

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 FabLab 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 Caoimhe McMahon: mcmahonc@staff.ncad.ie