Ravensbourne University London

Programme Title	MA Design Communications
Awarding Body	Ravensbourne University London
Teaching Institution	Ravensbourne University London
Final Award	Level 7 – MA Design Communications
Interim awards	Postgraduate Certificate (60 Credits)
	Postgraduate Diploma (120 Credits)
UCAS Code	N/A
QAA Subject Benchmark	QAA Master's Degree Characteristics Statement (2015)
PRSB reference	N/A
Mode of study	Part-time and Full-time modes
Date produced/amended	May 2021
Course Leader	Angelo Stitz

Distinctiveness

Overview

Ravensbourne's Postgraduate Department provides a research and practice-led framework to allow designers, creative practitioners, entrepreneurs, technology specialists and changemakers to take a holistic view of the impact of their creative and professional practice. The Master's courses allow learners to respond to the dramatic and on-going changes in the field of design as it becomes the basis for actionable insights and creative problem solving methodologies. Our area of specialism applies across a wide range of creative, economic, technology and social fields – from the nature of human interactions, to brand innovation and service systems, from the emergence of new business models to the challenge of consumption, health, wealth and wellbeing, from biodiversity to biotechnology. At the heart of Postgraduate Studies is an understanding of collaborative competencies, critical making, creative practice, real world engagement and interaction.

Learners will be taught, collaborate and co-create with a staff team of interdisciplinary design and business practitioners working across but not limited to: business management, leadership, service design, content creation, information technology, visual communication, social sciences, design criticism, design systems, communication platforms, social and economic change.

MA Design Communications

Ravensbourne's *MA Design Communications* is a taught Master's programme which offers students the opportunity to develop the advanced knowledge, understanding and skills to create and implement complex design and technology projects with an emphasis on systems and platforms for communication, responsive content creation, visualisation and experimental approaches.

The MA Design Communications is delivered over three terms alongside the other postgraduate courses within Ravensbourne's Institute of Creativity and Technology: MDes *Social Innovation*, *MDes Service Design*, MA *Luxury Brand Management and* MA *Illustration*. Through a series of shared units with these other postgraduate courses, *Design Communications* students are encouraged expand their own practice through examining how it intersects with other disciplines and how, from this intersection, innovative ideas emerge

The course sits within Ravensbourne University's new Institute for Creativity and Technology located in the Design District on the North Greenwich Peninsula at the heart of London. This

geographic and conceptual alignment connects creative practitioners, designers, researchers and students with local and global partnerships to explore the interplay between creativity and technology for education, industry and society. No other institution is offering an MA in this context.

The MA Design Communications reflects, and contributes to the expanding nature of visual communication. With an emphasis on subject, concept, criticality and making the course encompasses a broad range of practice across familiar and emergent technologies. These include but not limited to Concept Driven Graphic Design, Branding, Identity and advertising; Design for Prototyping and Product; Art Direction, Motion Graphics, Information Design, Data Visualisation, UX/UI Design, and AR/VR Experience Design.

The specialisation in and/or combination of these areas of practice will be determined by the interests of the individual MA students. The course will aim to support and develop these individual interests through the delivery of a distinctive, discursive, participatory, activated studio experiences in which a series of briefs, provocations and collaborative projects are used to bring students critically closer to the kind of practitioner they wish to become.

The MA Design Communications is a Master's programme running within Ravensbourne University's new Institute for Creativity and Technology in the heart of London's new Design District. The course offers participants the chance to develop their thinking and practice at the intersection of creativity, communication and technology.

This programme aims to embed participants in a dynamic physical and conceptual matrix of practice and potential with strong links to industry and an incubation programme for start-ups.

Programme aims

- To equip students with an understanding of the potential of technology in the creation, coordination and delivery of creative communication.

- To critically explore the potential of communication at the intersection of technology and culture

- To support and develop students' individual interests whilst building on their involvement in the Institute for Creativity and Technology

- To support and enable students in their objectives to become individuated practitioners with a clear understanding of the value of collaboration

- To equip students with the means to communicate their ideas in the most appropriate ways

Programme Learning Outcomes

The course provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas.

Learning Outcome 01: Identify and Research

You should be able to select, use and evaluate information gathering techniques using a wide range of sources, providing visual, contextual case-study research as appropriate and demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding. You should demonstrate how you use research to develop critical perspectives, systems thinking and future thinking on real world research and its ethical dimension of your professional practice in order to enhance your capacity

for judgement, values, perceptions and sustainable actions. You should demonstrate that you are able to use your research to further identify key areas of practice in which you as a practitioner wish to be involved.

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 01

Assessment on: Evidence of research, development, evidence of developed criticality, identification of key areas of practice, relationship to and understanding of professional practice.

Learning Outcome 02: Investigate and Analyse

By building on your research process you should develop the ability to critically appraise and evaluate appropriate materials to generate concepts and strategic project themes to inform and underpin concept development with an understanding of multiple outcomes, relationships and interactions. You should maintain a log/evidence /journal demonstrating your process and thinking around key issues you have identified in order to communicate your progress.

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 02

Assessment on: reflective narration of process, clarity and coherence in application of research; clear analysis of issues and problems arising, definition of interests in relation to practice.

Learning Outcome 03: Ideate and Develop

You should be able to develop iterative processes that will allow you to explore and experiment embracing human centred research methodologies, risk, testing, prototyping and evaluation in order to determine, improve and apply your knowledge and understanding of the desired outcomes across a range of appropriate processes, media, materials and organisational models.

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 03: Ideate and Develop

Assessment on: evidence of iteration, design of test systems, prototyping, process-oriented analysis of outcomes desired and otherwise, strategy for development of process based analysis of results, evidence and communication of development and application of knowledge and understanding.

Learning Outcome 04: Innovate
You should be able to demonstrate your ability to question and critique the orthodoxy of your chosen subject area/ discipline and show how this is reflected in the work and projects you are developing. You should be able to demonstrate and communicate how you can apply different problem solving frameworks to complex problems and develop viable, inclusive and participatory solutions

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 04: Innovate

Assessment on: demonstration of originality of idea and execution; knowledge of cultural, commercial and critical contexts; importance of innovation, development and communication of critical analysis and judgement.

LO 5 Instigate and Influence

You should be able to reflect on your own values, perceptions and actions at both an individual and global systemic level and develop narrative techniques to create visions of the future and build influence amongst key stakeholders and audiences. You should develop and demonstrate your ability to instigate, manage and record/reflect on the issues around and affecting your chosen area of research or practice, applying the knowledge and understanding you have gained.

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 05: Instigate and Influence

Assessment on: the clarity and currency of your message, the communication of your project purpose; structure and delivery of narrative.

LO 6 Implement

You should be able to synthesise and demonstrate your research and practice and demonstrate possible pathways towards implementation being able to assess the consequence of actions and impacts. you should demonstrate the development of judgement in using the most appropriate medium for successful delivery.

Assessment Criteria aligned to Learning Outcome 06: Implement

Assessment on: the positioning of your practice within broader critical, cultural, creative and commercial contexts.

Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment Strategy
Ravensbourne's academic-practitioners are international experts in their disciplines, enthusiastic and committed to building and sharing knowledge with new entrants to the world of the creative industries. Ravensbourne's increasing engagement with applied research means that tutors are actively engaged in specialist research areas especially around new technology. Learning is enhanced by Visiting Lecturers who are current practitioners and by speakers from the world of communications, platform design and brand innovation.	A variety of assessment methods are employed across all units. They include: formative and summative presentations, peer assessment and external reviews. These methods encourage you to critically reflect on your learning and progress.
Our approach	Formative feedback is given at the end of each term and students will receive ongoing advice and guidance (feed forward) alongside a critique against learning outcomes and assessment criteria. At the end of the unit summative assessment will provide conclusive feedback in response to an online submission of the assessment requirements.
The learning blend used will alter from unit to unit according to the nature of the curriculum content and the level of the unit. Typically, most units combine some face to face teaching through lectures, project briefings, seminars, screenings, and critiques with independent projects (undertaken by students independently (or when appropriate in groups) supported by activity on the virtual learning environment (AULA). During their studies, students will also experience guest lectures by world specialists, study visits, bootcamps, technical workshops, and be involved in pitches, presentations and online interactive activity. It is important at Ravensbourne that the blend is rich and varied in order to ensure students develop a range of learning capacities.	
Tutor and student led seminars encourage students to see themselves as part of a learning community which exchanges as well as develops knowledge. Critiques and presentations develop students' abilities to reflect on and contextualise their work and provide an opportunity for	

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students to explain their project's developmental process including challenges, failures, adjustments, timing, materials, or team structure.

Communications concept development, prototyping, and mind mapping are used at a formative stage to assist students in the narrowing down and refining of an idea, the analytic breakdown a complex task into component parts or the production of a product or artefact.

A central part of postgraduate course work consists of group work. This normally focuses on a live Project and involves students self-organising into teams, allocating roles and responsibilities in order to respond to and meet a Brief.

Group work is assessed on the basis of a presentation in front of tutors and external stakeholders from the world of the creative industries who often have commissioned the project. Students will also be invited to complete a Reflective Report on the Group project outlining their own contribution and the learning they have gained from the project

Through the challenge of group work, report writing and reflective practice as well as the visualisation of ideas and giving creative form to solutions, students have the opportunity to develop strong leadership skills and conceptual skills, to consolidate their professional practice and analytical skills and to demonstrate a level of understanding and ability to articulate the depth of contextual understanding of Communications Design.

Students are also encouraged to express thoughts and ideas using the range of media at their disposal: prototyping, VR/AR, the use of video, web and presentations. Reports and blogs are used to track and assess the unfolding process of a piece of work and the practical and intellectual journey taken by a student in response to a project brief.

Unit Code	Unit Title	Credits
	Core Units	
PG20701	Design Principles, Application and Impacts	30
PG20702	Speculative Design and Transmedia Storytelling	30
PG20703	Research Methods, Ethnography and User Centred Approaches	30
PG20704	Collaboration, Co-Creation and Facilitation	30
PG20705	Outcomes and Outputs	60
TOTAL CREDITS		**180**

Entry Requirements

First or Upper Second Class honours degree (or equivalent non-UK qualifications) in a relevant subject, or an equivalent professional qualification in a related subject area.
If you are applying directly from an undergraduate degree course without experience or professional practice you must be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of your chosen subject area.

In order to be eligible for a course, you will need to be a competent speaker and writer of English. This also applies if you are from the European Union, or if you're from a country outside the EU. You need to provide us with an IELTS or equivalent English language qualification demonstrating an overall of 6.0 and a minimum of 5.5 or CEFR Level B2 in each component.

Accreditation of Prior Learning

Applications are welcomed from those who may not possess formal entry qualifications, mature students, those with work experience or with qualifications other than those listed above. Such applicants should demonstrate sufficient aptitude and potential to complete the course successfully. Applicants will be assessed at interview in accordance with Ravensbourne's Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure.

Student Support	https://www.ravensbourne.ac.uk/student-services
Assessment Regulations	https://www.ravensbourne.ac.uk/staff-and-student-policies

Course LOs	Unit PG20701	Unit PG20702	Unit PG20703	Unit PG20704	Unit PG20705
LO1	x				x
LO2	x				x
LO3		x	x		x
LO4		x	x		x
LO5				x	x
LO6				x	x

Description of the Course

The fields of communication design and visual communication are broader than at any time in history, and yet with the multiplex of channels that communication of various kinds is required to occupy and work where there is a need for specificity in intention and invention derived from a real understanding of the potential of technology that both shapes and carries messaging of all kinds.

The means by which we humans communicate with each other have always depended upon technology and technological advances. Successful use of the channels of communication have, too, depended upon the understanding and mastery of technique. Consequently, the MA *Design Communications* aims to equip and inspire students to work at the intersection of creative communication and technology.

The course recognises that technology moves quickly and that the skills and techniques learned within particular suites of software or in particular modes of delivery –like any dynamic system – will evolve and change. This realisation means that the course has to focus on two key aims. Firstly, the generation of the most appropriate responses to the need for creative communication; and secondly, the development of a broad understanding of the potential of technology in the creation, coordination and delivery of communication.

This course has been designed to enable students to examine the interplay between creativity and technology in the broadest sense. Students will critically examine the role of technologies within digitally facilitated and post digital social dynamics and the contribution of design practice to digital material culture.

Students will be supported to realise and expand the contemporary and future roles of the discipline with emphasis on digital empathy, social responsibility and ethical practice. Through exploring the position of design and the designer in the here and now students will explore roles of communication and technology in contributing to industries within and outside of the creative sectors and society as a whole.

As the global communication multiplex expands and the demand for distinct and coherent messaging grows, the demand for practitioners who understand, question and shape both the content and the means of delivery across multiple platforms and channels is clear and present and destined to grow, too.

Course Diagram Full Time

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Level 7 180 credits	**PG20701** **Design Principles, Application and Impacts** 30 credits	**PG20703** **Research Methods, Ethnography and User Centred Approaches** 30 Credits	**PG20704** **Collaboration, Co-creation and Facilitation** 30 credits
	PG20702 **Speculative Design and Storytelling** 30 Credits	**PG20705** **Outcomes and Outputs** 60 Credits	

Course Diagram - Part Time (2 years)

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Level 7 Year 1	**PG20701** **Design Principles, Application and Impacts** 30 credits	**PG20703** **Research Methods, Ethnography and User Centred Approaches** 30 Credits	**PG20704** **Collaboration, Co-creation and Facilitation** 30 credits

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Level 7 Year 2	**PG20702** **Speculative Design and Storytelling** 30 Credits	**PG20705** **Outcomes and Outputs** 60 Credits	

Contact teaching – 1 x 5 hour day per week = 60 hours per 30 credits / teaching timetable – 12 weeks + 1 reading week per term = 36 weeks per year + 3 reading weeks

Student Journey

The Master's programmes at the Institute are designed with the idea of experimentation and exploration at the forefront. The programme is constructed through a series of discipline specific and interdisciplinary Units. The year-long programme consists of three terms.

Each term is divided between a discipline specific unit, led by discipline specialists, and a collective interdisciplinary unit, delivered by a transdisciplinary staff team.

These units support and build upon one another to create an enriched holistic experience. Students will complete as with a rich and distinctive practice, confident in their own specialisms but with the ability to lead, collaborate and share knowledge within wider creative teams.

The MA Design Communications aims to provide the opportunity for students to develop creative thinking and innovative strategies through an advanced understanding of the practical application of design and communication skills to, complex multichannel communication in order to equip students with the knowledge and skills to apply their learning and creativity in a global context. In particular, the MA aims:

- To equip students with an advanced knowledge and understanding of the contextual background to and developments in design and communication through the lens of technology and to reflect on that learning in order to advance their own practice and subject area and to innovate.
- To develop designers and communicators with effective organisational and narrative skills who through their creativity and global cultural awareness are able to influence and create positive change whether at an individual or collective level.
- To equip individuals with independent study skills that support their research, practice and professional development and allow them to continue developing as life-long learners throughout their professional lives maintaining contact with emerging practice from a variety of fields.
- To provide a stimulating environment, which is supportive, flexible and collaborative and allows each individual to develop to his/her potential.

The programme consists of five units of study which will take the individual student through an exploration of design thinking and creative practice underpinned by participation in studio projects which allow the designer to develop his/her own approach to creativity, design practice, and creative innovation. Students learn to understand the perspectives of the different professionals and practice areas/business functions which may be involved in a complex design projects and how to collaborate and lead diverse teams. Major emphasis is placed on the growth of the learner's capacity to develop his/her own practices and methodologies in order to create original solutions to social challenges, consumer behaviour, organisational and leadership issues.

The learner is also encouraged to engage proactively in the wide range of activities and events and in the opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning offered at Ravensbourne. Of particular importance is industry engagement through external speakers, events and live project briefs as part of the Institute for Creativity and Technology.

MA Design Communications – Course Units

PG20701 - Design Principles, Application and Impacts (Discipline specific)
The first taught Unit is delivered under *Design Principles, Application and Impacts.* Within the context of the *MA Design Communications* the initial briefs are designed to encourage exploration of the culture surrounding the kind of work the students which to develop. We will be looking at research and research methodologies, at how we might define a "literature" (the material culture, imagery, texts and thinking) and "principles" surrounding an area of development and research, and how we

use that research to inform the development of the core projects that will see students through the MA. Students will be expected to start and maintain a learning journal/portfolio, with which they can chart their progress and the development of their process.

Sample Project Brief

This unit is an opportunity to experiment and explore ideas of design principles, communication and technology, to reveal the intentions behind your personal creative practice. A series of exercises, workshops and activities you will support you to test and experiment across different methods and theories related to design practices. Together we will explore the structures and mechanisms that facilitate the development of a self-directed practice.

We will address the processes that underpin the initiation of a body of ideas through synthesising research and critical making to help determine clear intentions for design practice. The unit will encourage independent and collaborative outcomes. Through understanding our unique positions, we can then determine how we can inform and support one another.

*The unit will use the provocations; 'principles', 'application' and 'impacts' to provide a structure to frame the construction and development of critical practice. Across the weeks you will amass a body of work which will equip you with the tools, methods and process to self-identify and self-direct your creative practice which can be applied as you progress through the course and beyond. **Remember:** Your existing knowledge and skills are valuable. Your own lived experiences provide you with a perspective and position, speak from that position. **You will need to consider:** Who are your audiences, and what do they need to understand and engage with the work? Where should your work be situated?*

PG20702 - Speculative Design and Storytelling (Interdisciplinary)

This Unit will look at ways in which Design Communications can be used as a method to generate new ideas based on how things 'could be' using speculation and anticipation to inform the designing of new solutions based on visions of the future. The Unit will develop and deploy prompts, artefacts and narratives to critically interrogate preferable futures, the processes, methods mental models and stories for imagining the future to inform the present. In doing so it will apply storytelling techniques using immersive technologies to engage mass audiences in a way that's nonlinear, interactive, participatory and immersive. The aim of the Unit is to allow students to look into the future where very radical innovation is likely to be necessary. It will draw on futurology, the philosophy and ethics of technology and concepts around the circular economy.

Sample Brief*: Devise, define and design a campaign/messaging to encourage the considerate use of shared public space by people on electrically powered bicycles, scooters, boards, segways etc. You should think about the scalability of your idea and show how the messaging can be made to work at a range of different scales, intensities and for future generations.*

PG20703 - Research Methods, Ethnography and User Centred Approaches (Interdisciplinary)
This Unit will comprise a combination of theoretical and practical focus allowing students to test out the observational skills and user-centred design skills in order to understand human behaviour in context. At the heart of this unit is the aim to 'make the familiar strange': questioning a familiar and taken-for-granted service in their lives through ongoing personal reflection and, as a result develop new service blueprints from ethnographic data, and how to communicate this data. A key part of this

Unit will involve students working in groups to apply their knowledge of ethnographic and human centred/eco-centred approaches.

PG20704 - Collaboration, Co-creation and Facilitation (Interdisciplinary)

This Term involves us working in teams in cross disciplinary ways in order to open up the experience of how Design Communications intersects with other practices and disciplines. The focus of this term's work is on Ideation and Innovation and as such this project is designed to create the scaffolding for these elements of your learning. In opening up the possibility of creating new ways of working with collaborators routes to ideation are opened up. Similarly, the potential for innovation is supported by the processes of collaboration. What new approaches to a problem can be found by opening your process up to collaborators specialising in other disciplines? The scope here allows students to approach a brief through a variety of design "lenses". Students are expected to find ways to collaborate in order to produce their desired outcome; to document and journal the processes of task/brief analysis of leadership method, iteration and editing, programme and exhibition. The aim of the Unit is to produce an outcome derived from the combination of different skills and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Sample Brief:

> *Forming inter-disciplinary teams working both face-to-face and remotely you will be expected to apply a Design communications approach for a platform which has the capacity to disrupt and enhance an existing set of communications practices and services. In doing so you will be invited to prototype a new platform environment for creative interactions, peer engagement, ways to generate social and organisational value for communications professionals using the following design principles:*
>
> > ***Play*** *– using chance, absurdity, inversion, response and competition to bring to life innovative ideas.*
> >
> > ***Disrupt*** *- generating a disruptive strategy in relation to an incumbent model, environment, set of practices.*
> >
> > ***Narrate*** *- using the power of structured narrative.*
> >
> > ***Occupy*** *- identifying and mapping out unoccupied spaces where opportunities to expand and disrupt might reside.*
> >
> > ***Publish*** *- exploring methods for taking your prototype to a broader audience.*

PG20705 - Outcomes and Outputs (Discipline Specific)

This is Unit is designed to provide the scaffolding within which students will complete their portfolios and Research Projects. During the Outcomes and Outputs Unit students will create their own bespoke practice-based research project based on a sustained critical inquiry that engages individual creative practice and disciplines. The research project is an opportunity for students to design an ideal project and immerse themselves in the areas in which they are most motivated and fascinated.

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