Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

	Basic Course Information	
1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	School of Art & Design/City Campus
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	MA Branding and Identity
		Full-time
4.	Normal Duration:	One year
5.	UCAS Code:	N/A

6.	**Overview and general educational aims of the course**

The heart, the mind and the body of a company are represented by its brand and visual identity. Brands communicate values and help build reputations, and so the role of the designer in this specialist field is vital, in helping companies compete and succeed in a world where brands can be as important, or as desirable, as the product or service they appear on.

Therefore, this course values your ideas and encourages you to take an open-minded approach to your practice; by seeking out creative and intellectual possibilities that this expanding dynamic and global subject matter offers contemporary visual communicators. You will examine the exciting and, at times, challenging, cultural and contextual dialogues surrounding your practice.

The MA in Branding and Identity is concerned with the research, development and production of creative, original and effective Branding and Identity solutions. We will challenge and support you to become creative thinkers and innovators, personalising your learning by equipping you with a range of specialist visual and problem-solving skills, enabling you to plan and create designs that function across an ever increasing, and interrelated, range of print and digital media.

Essentially, the philosophy of Masters study is to be open-minded: we do not seek to define these areas of branding; instead we encourage you to look at the possibilities that exist for original new thought, interpretation, creativity and therefore innovation. This course is an opportunity for you to develop an advanced practice in Branding and Identity, to explore and understand the relationships between theory and practice, the role and relevance for branding and identity within contemporary global society, and to develop your unique creative vision within the diverse contexts that comprise this exciting and dynamic arena.

At the core of Masters in Branding and Identity, is the development of your ideas through learning and applying a robust design process. By researching, analysing, testing and evaluating ideas and working methods, you will gain a thorough

understanding of current thinking and practice in professional design. The structure of the course enables a flexible approach to learning. Initially, course work is based on the development of projects that are aimed at challenging designs conventions, these are either self-initiated or chosen from briefs set by our staff, or outside agencies, designed to reflect real-life, future facing design problems.

You will develop your own written Masters project proposal, while working on set, specialist design brief. Throughout the course you will develop and then complete your Masters project, the emphasis within the course is on supporting your unique set of needs and aims as defined by your project.

All this will result in you developing relevant professional and academic attributes gained through the professional experiences that are embedded into the design, learning and assessment of your course.

Alongside project work, you will also produce a Professional Practice Journal; this will turn into a complete record of personal research, experiences and learning within Branding and Identity. This journal will form a perfect complement to your portfolio of practical work, providing future employers with a clear insight of your understanding of the broader theories, practices, roles and responsibilities of a career designer/manager.

This course offers you two study options:
Option A - 180 credit module 'Branding and Identity'
Option B - 160 credit module 'Branding and Identity (option B)' plus the 20 credit 'Advanced Art and Design Research' module

If you choose to take Option B, the core module will comprise 160 credits. As you are also taking a 20 credit advanced research module, there will be no requirement to include in depth research into methodology as part of the 160 credit point module. You will be asked to decide which option you wish you take in the middle of the first term, and your supervisor will discuss your choices with you.

Through the course you will be treated as a mature, independent, individual specialist in Branding and Identity, with a personal responsibility for your own learning aims and career planning. Meetings and presentations are conducted in a friendly and professional manner, with deadlines met in an efficient way. Through this business-like approach to studies, you will become well prepared to further your career.

The Course encourages a commitment to the exchange of ideas and knowledge across international boundaries. Through engagement with peers, and others from

many different cultures and backgrounds, you will gain a first-hand understanding of teamwork, diversity and community.

The Masters in Branding and Identity is part of a closely aligned group of three full time courses, MA Branding and Identity, MA Graphic Design and MA Illustration. This is designed to provide a common framework to encourage and enable interaction and cross-fertilization between related subjects in the Visual Communication's community. They are also designed to deliver the standard requirements of the subject benchmarks and to promote autonomous and reflective learning.

The Visual Communication community further aims to create and foster a broad community of practitioners. To help encourage this; various industry professionals will be invited to contribute to the first part of the courses, demonstrating and encouraging the cross-fertilization that occurs within the post-modern paradigm of employability. These contributions will enable various employability sessions that will support our diverse MA cohorts.

Underpinning all these course aims, is the fostering of a risk-taking approach to design solutions. You will be encouraged to challenge conventions, to develop a strong personal viewpoint and use your imagination creatively.

| 7. | **Course learning outcomes** |
| | Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide. |

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Evaluate and use a range of advanced research methods, and design appropriate research methodologies, to gain a high level of understanding in the contemporary theory and practice of branding and identity (B)

- Use structured, creative problem solving theories, in devising advanced branding and identity strategies (B)

- Evaluate professional design and production techniques and systems, to choose methods relevant to the creation and distribution of graphic media

- Research, evaluate and explain current and emerging debates, at the forefront of international branding and identity (B)

- Apply an original, personal hypothesis to your project development and outcomes (B)

- Develop advanced knowledge in branding and identity, through critical evaluation and reflection (B)

- Define and set personal aims for learning, and professional development, through reflective practice. (B)

Skills, qualities and attributes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Apply advanced research skills into the theory and practice of branding and identity and use findings to inform your project work (B)

- Use advanced, creative problem solving skills in the development of effective visual branding and identity strategies and outcomes

- Experiment with a broad range of conventional and unconventional visual elements, materials and techniques

- Evaluate your visual development work at key stages through the use of end user testing, and specialist or professional advice (B)

- Create visual development, and final outcomes, which are informed by current and emerging international research and debate at the forefront of branding and identity (B)

- Challenge conventions in the development and design of innovative branding and identity strategies and solutions (B)

- Plan and deliver solutions to complex problems through effective management of time and resources (B)

- Design and deliver verbal and visual presentations which show your advanced knowledge and skills in branding and identity. (B)

(B) – these specific learning outcome statements have been benchmarked against the QAA benchmark statements for similar courses and level.

| 8. | **Teaching and Learning Methods** |

The Course teaching, learning and assessment strategy is informed by the principles, policies, practices and regulations detailed in the University's *Quality Handbook*.

The course is designed so that you will receive continuous feedback on your progress. Continual assessment is one of the most important learning and teaching strategies within the course, enabling you to develop as an independent learner.

You will be encouraged to reflect on your work and undertake self and peer assessment, developing a clear understanding of the assessment criteria. The purpose of assessment is to enable you to demonstrate that you have met the learning outcomes of the course and reached a specified standard to attain your MA.

The MA places great emphasis on the development of personal learning aims. The course structure offers you the scope to develop your own, distinctive creative practice, based on a platform of considered research, critical understanding and reflective learning.

You will attend regular group tutorials with an appointed supervisor. Tutorials are opportunities to present your work in progress and to receive feedback and advice on the further development of projects. At each tutorial, you will receive written feedback and agree goals to be achieved for the next tutorial. You will also receive presentations, and engage with workshops and seminars on topics relevant to professional theory and practice in design.

The Course may also support you in gaining work-based learning and short internships and studio visits. You may also enter competitions or take on live projects. The Visual Communications subject area also benefits from talks, given from visiting professionals, covering a wide range of creative and professional practice.

In essence, you will learn by doing, by reflecting and by discussion with others. Peer group learning is fostered, independent self-directed learning is expected, and directed teaching is also provided. You will learn by problem solving while completing set tasks, and you will also learn by analysing your own work and setting your own aims for improvement.

9.	**Assessment Methods**

Assessment is conducted according to the School's 'Assessment and Feedback: Principles and Guidelines' ensuring that the assessment process and standards are made clear to you. Assessment will focus on your level of achievement against each of the course, and module, learning outcomes, and your ability to reflect on the process supporting your achievement. All learning outcomes have assessment and grading criteria that describe the level of learning achieved against each learning outcome.

The primary purpose of assessment is to enable you to demonstrate that you have fulfilled the course and module learning outcomes, and achieved the standard for a Masters award.

Written formative feedback will be given to support you in developing your knowledge and skills as you progress through the course. You will also receive written formative feedback about the progress you are making at each tutorial, via the completion of a tutorial record form. You will also receive feedback from staff and peers during group presentations, workshops and seminars.

Phase One: Research and Conceptualisation

After the first phase, there will be a review of all coursework to date; includes your MA project proposal, set project research and development, Professional Journal and practical work. A formal verbal presentation of work is also required, to summarise development and outcomes.

Phase: Creative Development and Evaluation

A review of all of your coursework at the end of the second phase include your Masters project research, visual experimentation and development, an analysis of testing methods and results, and your Professional Journal. A formal verbal presentation of work is also required, to summarise development and outcomes.

Advanced Art and Design Research (20 credit points)

At this point of the course, if you opt to take the 160-credit point core module, alongside the 20-credit point advanced research module, the work for review will comprise the same aims and content, but you will not be required to conduct research into advanced research methodologies as part of the core module itself.

The 20-credit point advanced research module comprises a series of lectures, and discussions that will support you in producing a piece of written work. This document interrogates the methodology of your own Branding and Identity practice in response to the methodological and philosophical underpinning of research practice.

Phase Three: Design for Production and Communication

At the end of the course, you will undertake a synoptic assessment. This requires you to reflect on the range of activities and experiences across the entirety of your course in relation to your future employability.

This assessment of your final project, includes all your research and development work, a Professional Journal and a submission of finished design outcomes. A formal verbal presentation of your work is also required that summarises the development and project outcomes. You will also plan and design an exhibition of work.

The learning outcomes of the 180 credit module, or the 160 and 20 credit modules, will determine whether you have passed the Master's course. All course learning outcomes have assessment and grading criteria that describe the level of learning you have achieved, against each learning outcome. Your work is assessed against
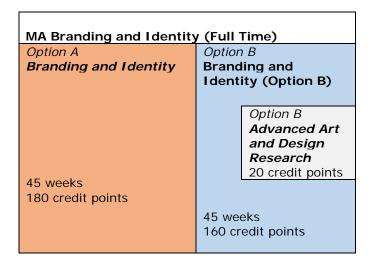
the learning outcomes to determine your award; for example, Distinction, Commendation, Pass or Fail, according to your level of achievement.

If for any reason you fail to meet the MA Learning Outcomes at the end of the course, you will be provided with referral and retrieval options as determined by the Board of Examiners. These decisions are informed by the University's Common Assessment Regulations and the course team's academic judgment.

If after this point you have still not met the learning outcomes for the MA award, your work will then be assessed against the learning outcomes for the interim awards of; Postgraduate Certificate in Branding and Identity (equivalent to 60 credit points at Masters level), or Postgraduate Diploma in Branding and Identity (equivalent to 120 credit points at Masters level).

This decision will be made by the Board of Examiners at the end of the course, and will be confirmed by an External Examiner.

10.	**Course structure and curriculum**

MA Branding and Identity (Full Time)

Option A **Branding and Identity**	*Option B* **Branding and Identity (Option B)**
45 weeks 180 credit points	*Option B* **Advanced Art and Design Research** 20 credit points 45 weeks 160 credit points

MA Branding and Identity is a full-time course, delivered over one academic year, running from September to July.

Phase One: Research and Conceptualisation

You will work on short design challenges set by supervisors, which can include national design competition briefs, to help you establish good practice in Masters research methods and foster sound approaches to design development.

Through studying the relationship between research and design development, you will foster a systematic approach to your practice, and begin to define your personal aims as a professional designer. Using the design-process theory as a framework for developing ideas, you will investigate how originality and imagination, combined with sound research skills, can be combined to produce innovative visual communications.

This will equip you to research, initiate and develop project briefs in an efficient, creative and professional manner and enable you to apply these design strategies effectively to your negotiated Major Masters project proposal.

In the context of this phase, research can be interpreted in two ways: it is research in support of creativity; and it is in itself a creative activity in that it is part of a problem solving process.

In addition to this you will set your personal learning aims in a **Journal of Professional Practice**. In this professional journal you will record your research into the broader territory of current and future trends in **branding and identity**. You will critically reflect on this research and discuss how you can apply this to your own practice. Within this Journal you will also be able to reflect on the various industry professionals that are invited to contribute to the first part of the course, giving you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the cross-fertilization that occurs within the post-modern paradigm of employability. This will also give you space to deconstruct and thus develop your own employability skills and planning (e.g. CV, LinkedIn and Social Media.)

Phase Two: Creative Development and Evaluation

In the second phase, you will progress your Major Masters project by applying research methods to the development and testing of a range of possible design outcomes.

In phase 2 you will explore the scope of your ideas through the selection and use of appropriate development methods; visual experimentation, ideation, researching specific media relevant to your chosen project, testing your work with your end user and developing professional context and contacts. By fostering an experimental approach, you should aim to stretch the boundaries of your existing thought and practice, to expand your abilities in originality and innovation.

You will conduct regular testing of the interim stages of project developments, using appropriate methods of research and evaluation. In particular, you will investigate the methods and practices of end-user testing to ensure that your ideas are credible.

By thoroughly exploring a range of development and testing methods to your Major Masters project, you will discover new ways of working and thinking, and extend the range and depth of your knowledge and skills.

By the end of the phase, you will have a consolidated **branding and identity** solution based on sound reasoning and contextualisation, ready to take forward for further design development, production and completion in the final phase.

If you are studying the 160-credit point version of the core module, you are not required to complete a Journal of Professional Practice in this phase. Instead you will undertake reflective practice as part of the 20-credit point advanced research module.

Phase Three: Design for Production and Communication

In the final phase you are expected to demonstrate the research, development and mastery of visual language, the skilful organisation of complex data and the successful conclusion of an advanced examination of professional, contemporary **branding and identity** strategy.

You should show advanced skills in managing the resources and services needed to consolidate your project, and in scheduling your time efficiently to achieve deadlines. You will also show informed consideration in the choice of materials and processes used, or proposed, for the production of your work, to demonstrate knowledge of current industry practices, and to show an awareness of ethical and sustainability issues. This will include the use of suitable industry standard software and the ability to select, reference and specify appropriate materials.

You will also need to demonstrate a strong commitment to applying original, personal interpretations of your project brief. A willingness to be innovative and to challenge the conventions of **branding and identity** design, while ensuring credible, functional solutions, should also be apparent.

In your Journal of Professional Practice, you are expected to show and reference advanced knowledge of the commercial processes, production and media commonly used for the design and distribution of **branding and identity** media.

The completed body of work, consisting of practical and theoretical work, will be submitted for assessment and grading. You will also plan and create a display of Masters project work, and give a final verbal and visual presentation of development and outcomes.

11.	**Admission to the course**

The entry requirements are an honours degree of a minimum 2:2 or equivalent in a relevant discipline, or equivalent, relevant professional experience. You are required to submit a Study Proposal, examples of your work and two references, at least one of which should be academic. For applicants whose first language is not English, a minimum of IELTS 6.5 or equivalent is required.

All applicants to practice-based subjects are asked to submit a portfolio of work with the online application (PowerPoint and/or QuickTime presentation). This should include at least 12 examples of work in the form of images, photographs, drawings etc., with dates and descriptions of the projects.

The proposal should describe your aims and objectives for research and for developing your own practice through undertaking the MA, including an explanation of how your proposal relates to your existing study or professional background.

Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL)
Exceptional candidates from non-academic backgrounds with a proven track record in a relevant industry and commerce will also be considered if they can demonstrate evidence of achievement comparable to the learning outcomes set out in the course documentation. Those with non-traditional backgrounds but with evidence of skill, and/or a portfolio of work which meets the admission standards of the course, will be considered.

12.	**Support for Learning**

The School is committed in assisting you to achieve the best results possible during your studies and will provide you with a wide range of academic and pastoral help and advice. In addition to the course leader and course administrator, a member of staff will also be assigned to you at the start of your course that you can communicate with on more personal matters.

The Student Handbook (available on NOW) contains details of all the support available to you. If there is an interruption in your studies due to circumstances outside of your control, or through other factors affecting your academic performance, then please speak to your Course Leader for advice on what to do next.

At the start of the course, you will be invited to participate in 'Welcome Week' where you will undertake a range of activities that introduce many of the key facilities available within the University and is the essential introduction to the course. You

will meet staff and fellow students and will be able to find out more about how you will be taught and assessed. At the same time, the Student's Union organise their social events in 'welcome week' that encourages your involvement in the wider NTU community.

NTU's Online Workspace (NOW) is used on your course and allows key information to be accessed and shared within modules at any time and location; encouraging you to take responsibility for your own learning.
You can also access your results through NOW.

To ensure that you have a clear understanding of the way in which you are progressing within the modules, you will receive feedback on the progress that you are making on a regular basis. Group and individual tutorials are an important informal opportunity to receive feedback from fellow students and your tutors. Alongside this informal, verbal feedback you will also receive formal, formative written feedback at set points in the module, which will help you to progress and develop your Masters project. At the end of the module your work will be assessed and moderated to provide your final summative grade, which will be confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

Academic guidance is given in the supervised sessions and is designed to meet individual student's needs. For international students, whose English isn't their first language, the Language Centre can provide tailored sessions and all are encouraged to attend.

In addition to the support that the lecturers on your course will offer, you also have access to a wide range of specialist staff to support a variety of issues that might arise, e.g. financial, health, wellbeing, disability etc. Language and academic support is also provided by for international students who require additional study support.

13.	**Graduate destinations / employability**

The synoptic assessment used in your course, enables you to reflect on your skills, experiences and resulting activities, in relation to your future employability. Your course has a strong focus on producing highly employable students and is committed to offering experiences throughout the course that will enhance your understanding of the requirements to become a contemporary photographer.

To this end the Art & Design Employability Team can prepare you well for your future. They can offer a variety of activities to support you in preparing for your future. As part of the curriculum you will meet someone from the team as they

deliver group sessions and lectures about employability-related themes. This often covers CV building, job hunting and applications, preparing for interviews and even building your personal brand.

They can also offer support in finding work experience and set up events where prospective employers can come into NTU so that you can talk to them in person about future opportunities.

There is a wide range of career opportunities across the three specialist subjects. Recent graduates have set up their own successful businesses here and abroad; progressed to further study at PhD level; found work within related careers in the design sector, or have returned to their previous occupations with a new focus and vigour.

14.	**Course standards and quality**

Quality management of the course is in accordance with the University's Quality Handbook and is monitored by the School's Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Responsibility for maintaining an overview of and managing the course lies with the course committee that meets three times a year. There are opportunities for you to become course representatives. Their role is to engage their fellow students in debate about the course and bring these collated views to the course committee meeting for discussion and offer feedback on matters arising.

Any issues brought up at the course committee meetings are reported to the school academic standards and quality committee and actions identified from this meeting along with responses will be reported back to you either via the next course committee meeting or via NOW.

It is important to the course and the School that you have opportunities to offer feedback on modules, the course or any aspect of University life. There are a number of ways that you will be asked for your views either informally or formally. The module feedback that you will be asked to complete is in the form of a questionnaire and is referred to as 'EvaSys'. In addition to this, you have other formal channels where you can give feedback and these are at Student/staff liaison meetings, Course Committee Meetings CCM and via School-level meetings.

At the end of each year the course team write an evaluative document entitled the Interim Course Report (ICR) which is received at School level and contains an action plan to ensure that the course continues to reflect and develop its curriculum to remain current.

	An External Examiner is also appointed whose job it is to make judgements about and report on the standard of your course in relation to other comparable courses in the UK. Part of their role is to review samples of assessed work and confirm at the Board of Examiners that the internal assessment and moderation practices are fair and in line with the School and NTU's policies. The external examiner also writes a report at the end of each academic year and this will be available to you via NOW, together with a response written by the Course Team and the Course Committee..
15.	**Assessment regulations** This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in its <u>Academic Standards and Quality Handbook</u>).
16.	**Additional Information**

Additional Information

Collaborative partner(s):	None
Course referenced to national QAA Benchmark Statements:	Master of Arts
Course recognised by:	Art & Design
Date this course specification approved:	1 September 2016 Advanced Standing Agreement added with AIVA, Shanghai (SASQC October 2016) SASQC Approval: 6 July 2018. Approval for PCR/Curriculum Refresh Modification Course Change and updates
Any additional information:	