Nottingham Trent University
School of Art & Design
Course Specification

Basic Course Information		
1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	School of Art & Design
3.	Final Award and Course Title:	BA (Hons) Graphic Design
4.	Mode of study and normal duration:	FT 3 years SW 4 years
5.	UCAS Code:	W210

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

Background

Graphic Design is one of the most exciting and dynamic sectors of the UK's highly successful creative industries. The award-winning BA Hons Graphic Design course offers you the opportunity to engage with this challenging and vibrant subject, through a curriculum that reflects the full diversity of professional current thought and practice. Underpinning the course is a range of experiences which link design with the broader contexts of the creative industry, these help to provide you with an understanding of the important role and significance of design in contemporary society.

One of the most popular and unique aspects of the course is that it allows you to study the broadest range of graphic design disciplines; Branding, Editorial, Illustration, Information Design, Interactive Design, Motion Graphics, Publishing, Packaging and Typography. After a thorough initial introduction to the principles of design, media and technology, you will then be able to go on to study your chosen aspects of graphic design in more depth as you progress through the course, with our final year offering you the opportunity to negotiate your individual programme of study. Throughout the course you will be fully supported in achieving your ambitions and will acquire the technical and thinking skills you will need to become the type of designer you want to be.

You may decide to take a broad approach to your studies or develop a specialist area of interest as you move through the course. Whatever direction you decide to take, our aim is to have helped you to develop a portfolio, by the end of the course, which will enable you get the kind of work that matches your personal ambitions.

The course enables you to bring your ideas to life and to achieve professional standards; you will have regular access to our comprehensive suite of industry-standard resources and facilities. There are fully equipped computer suites and studios dedicated to print, interactive media and moving image, supported by experienced technical staff in the resources. Along with the rest of the School of Art and Design, the course benefits from being part of a dynamic city-centre working environment shared with other exciting creative communities.

To meet the ever-changing demands of the future, we ensure that graduates of the BA Hons Graphic Design course are made aware of social, cultural, environmental and political issues that inform contemporary design. We believe that young designers need to be aware of, and understand the background to economic, technological and the ethical debates shaping our world and our future, and the importance of international and global needs and influences.

In helping you combine these insights with distinctive professional design skills, critical abilities and marketable personal attributes, our aim is for you to play an enjoyable and fulfilling role in society, fully equipped to become one of the creative innovators of tomorrow.

Special Features

Industry focus
The course embeds employability and career planning throughout: strong design skills being vital for achieving this, however there are other aspects of the course, which really help enhance the profile and attributes of our graduates. As part of your studies, you will be involved in activities that enable you to acquire the important transferable skills that are in high demand in the job market. Our graduates are notable for their confidence in pitching and making verbal and visual presentations, managing complex projects, working in and leading teams.

The course has strong, constructive links with some of the best professional practitioners and thinkers in the design industry. You will benefit from an informative and fascinating series of visiting lecturers and guest speakers, invited for their experiences and insights into the creative industries. We also collaborate with professional designers/agencies who set live projects briefs helping you to gain experience of working in a professional context - all students also have an opportunity to have portfolio work reviewed by industry professionals in level 6.

Design for positive impact
We believe that young designers can have a profound and positive influence and impact on society and offer a range of opportunities within our curriculum for our students to engage with activities that educate and empower them to use their practice as a tool for positive change.
We are members of, and partner with, the Creative Conscience network, an organisation dedicated to using creativity for positive impact in Society. As such we have lectures, workshops and design briefs centred around empowering students to become agents for change.
We also offer our students the opportunity to undertake projects set by the Royal Society of Arts – these briefs challenge students to tackle social, environmental and economic issues through design thinking.

National and International competitions
You are encouraged to enter national and international design competitions, with students from the course regularly gain national recognition for the quality of their work, we have consistently won national and international student awards including; New Designers, Design & Art Directors (D&AD), YCN (You Can Now), RSA Student Design Awards (Royal Society of Arts), Creative Conscience, the Penguin Student Design Award and the International Society for Typography Design (ISTD).

International Opportunities
Graphic design is a global industry, so we offer you an option of undertaking an international study trip - to date the course have visited Copenhagen, Berlin and New York where we have visiting a wide range of leading international design studios who have shared insights, and perspectives on practice with our students. Students may undertake live project briefs set by international agencies too, our subject is global, so our curriculum embeds international perspectives in lectures, briefings and projects across all years.

Employability Support
The School Art and Design offer an excellent range of employability support and the course has its own dedicated Professional Experience Tutor. We encourage all students to undertake some form of work experience your studies. You will have the opportunity to gain a School of Art and Design Placement Certificate in Professional Practice (for placements totalling a minimum of 6 weeks), or may wish to consider undertaking a Sandwich year (36 weeks) between year 2 and 3 of your studies – you would receive Diploma in Professional Practice in addition to your Degree if you undertook this option.

The professional focus is further supported by the industrial and research profiles of the extensive staff team. You will work and learn with a team of knowledgeable and

committed lecturers, which includes award winning designers and illustrators with experience of professional practice at national and international level in the fields of branding, editorial, design history & writing, graphic design, illustration, interactive and information design, filmmaking, publishing, motion design, typography and art direction.

Course aims

The course aims to equip you with the essential professional, creative, intellectual and technical skills that are required to work successfully within the national and international design professions and the broader creative industries.

The course will introduce you to the practice of research and the analysis of information, leading to the formation of sound independent judgements through reflection and evaluation and the presentation of well-reasoned arguments. You will be further encouraged through a course of exciting and challenging practical and theoretical projects to foster the development of your distinctive professional visual skills whilst retaining a personal vision. You will become fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of professional design practice and the ability to contextualise design within an ethical, sustainable, global, social and cultural framework and be prepared for a career that will support you adapting well to constant change and embracing life-long learning.

Aims:
- To support you in becoming agile, intellectually curious, collaborative, independent critical thinkers fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to instigate life-long learning
- To provide the opportunity for critical engagement and interrogation of your subject area
- To support and enable you to explore, identify personal development goals and realise your personal creative vision
- To provide you with a range of exciting opportunities to engage with industry practitioners to support your professional development
- To engage and equip you with knowledge and understanding of the global debates and discourses shaping the contemporary creative landscape
- To facilitate the acquisition of relevant transferable skills and knowledge for a successful career within the creative industries

7. **Course 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.

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

- Research, analyse and evaluate information to inform your work.
- Evaluate and synthesise relevant theories and practice to develop solutions within your work.
- Critically evaluate global contexts, key issues and debates within the subject to inform your practice and personal direction.
- Demonstrate intellectual curiosity and critical engagement with the subject.
- Evidence successful problem-solving strategies to resolve briefs.
- Experiment with appropriate media, materials, technologies and techniques and apply these to produce final outcomes.
- Identify, develop and apply personal directions in the creation of solutions to design problems.
- Demonstrate a professional attitude to time, project and resource management, and collaborate effectively with others.
- Realise your personal and professional developmental goals, learning independently and developing your transferrable skills.
- Employ effective professional presentation, communication, written, verbal and critical skills.

8. **Learning and teaching methods**

The Graphic Design course promotes interdisciplinarity, variety, diversity and experimentation within its curriculum. The curriculum contains a variety of challenging and engaging tasks, a comprehensive range of exciting learning experiences, all designed to help you gain the specialist knowledge, understanding and skills that you will need to become a part of the world of graphic design. The course is also committed to supporting a lively studio environment in which you will enjoy a collective and collaborative approach to learning, and a valuable sense of community with other students.

The course team believes that learning is a two-way process, based on regular discussions between staff and students. Consequently, working in small groups is an important aspect of your learning in tutorials and assessments throughout all three years. You will be encouraged to share ideas and give and receive constructive feedback in a supportive environment. Individual portfolio reviews and feedback on both studio and written work at key points on the course also give you an opportunity to discuss your progress and direction in depth with a lecturer.

You will be taught to reflect on and evaluate your progress and achievement between assessment points, either independently or in peer groups. The University also provides a framework of support for independent learning utilising a virtual learning environment called 'NOW' (NTU's Online Workspace), and this includes resources that can help you to take responsibility for your learning and support your personal development planning.

Throughout each level of the course you will be encouraged to recognise the need to use your initiative and to be well organised. Skills such as problem solving, group working, self-directing research and developing critical awareness will be developed through projects set in both studio-based and theoretical modules. We use synoptic assessment; looking at your work holistically to examine your coherent understanding of your own practice in relation to the learning outcomes, and how this is anchored within Graphic Design's professional and academic paradigms.

All first-year students within the School of Art and Design will work together on a joint project. Delivered in two parts, this will initially take place as a one-day event in the autumn, which will be followed up by a week event early in the summer term. As a learning experience this will support your own knowledge of working practices enable you to work collaboratively in groups in new and unique ways. In the second year, you will have further opportunities to work collaboratively with a wider range of students, partners and industry through.

In Year One you will focus on the development of your design process, this will assist you in developing your research, thinking and visualisation skills. You will experience a range of learning opportunities developing your personal practice alongside your employability skills. Throughout, you will be well supported by lecturers' tutorial/feedback sessions, studio activities, sign-up surgeries, workshops, group presentations and peer feedback where appropriate. Running alongside this studio practice will be a lecture and seminar series that introduces you to graphic design theory and context. In doing so you will explore contemporary issues and debates as they shape our understanding and engagement with the world.

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In Year Two, to help you to begin to focus on the wider professional context and to identify and develop your own personal direction, you will undertake projects, workshops and lectures, to help you to experience a range of specialist areas of design. Our industry led *live briefs* bring your employability skills into sharp focus, defining and preparing you for working as a graphic designer. You will be encouraged to gain a more realistic approach to the design process and to develop a higher

standard of visual and verbal presentation in project tutorials. These sessions will support your progress, while encouraging you to become a more independent learner. Through a series of contextual lectures and seminars you will make connections between your individual practice and the wider social, theoretical and cultural contexts that shape and influence the subject area.

As part of our commitment to develop personalisation in our curricula, you will be offered a choice of optional modules at level 5, from which you will pick one. The module options presented have been selected by the course team in order to compliment your study, and to give you the opportunity to follow and deepen your interests, and study with students from other courses.
In the second year, you will have further opportunities to work collaboratively with a wider range of students, partners and industry through a specific School-wide module.

Some students take the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus international study exchange scheme. If you are interested in an international exchange, you will take the responsibility for arranging it, with the support of the University Exchange Office and course staff.

In Year Three (final year) you will concentrate on developing a portfolio of creative work alongside a dissertation of your choice. You are expected to negotiate your own path through the year through your project choices or through self-initiated design briefs. You have an opportunity to demonstrate your critical and conceptual understanding through producing a written research project on a given topic. The emphasis in this final year is on developing greater autonomy through this increasingly self-directed study. Weekly group tutorials help monitor your progress and give you the opportunity to give and receive both peer and lecturer feedback. Regular tutorials frame your learning as a culmination of your studio work and contextual lectures of the previous two years.

The final year of the course also offers you a chance to make useful contacts through activities such as industry days, where invited guests offer advice, portfolio surgeries giving further insight into professional practice. The opportunity to work on self-initiated and live briefs also exists as well as the continuing possibility to organise short periods of work experience. Towards the end of the year, you will have the option of attending a portfolio surgery usually held in London where industry professionals are invited to view your work, offering further opportunity for contacts and networking.

In summary, learning on the course will take place through a variety of methods including:

- Business Meetings
- Studio activities
- Peer groups/assessment
- Independent learning
- Reflective practice
- Lectures
- Workshops
- Seminars
- Group tutorials
- One-to-one surgeries
- Portfolio reviews
- Work based learning
- Live projects
- Guest lectures
- 'NOW' - virtual learning environment

Within this supportive framework, you will be expected to continue to develop your independence, discovering and maturing your own interests and skills and working towards identified personal goals for your future career; laying the foundations for continuing personal, academic or professional development after graduation.

9. **Assessment methods**

Each year long studio module on the course has formative assessment and feedback points to support your progress and development. These points are situated at the end of Term One in each year (prior to the Christmas break) and at a mid-year point (before the Easter break). This is where you will receive a clear indication of how your work is progressing, at this given time, in relation to the learning outcomes for the module. The final summative assessment occurs at the end of each module.

In Design in Context 1 and 2 modules you will be assessed in *elements* that are aligned to set tasks within the module – summative marks from each element will be combined to determine your final level of achievement.

Two key elements influence the assessment process on the studio modules of this course. The first is to recognise that effective graphic design is produced through a process of research, analysis, development, testing and evaluation. The focus of assessment is therefore about how this body of work meets the module's learning outcomes and, in successful completion of each year, how the course' learning outcomes are met. The second is the value placed on *reflective learning*. Self-evaluation of your learning and development is therefore a regular aspect of tutorials and assessments. All process work that demonstrates the evolution and development of your ideas should be evidenced (sketch/process books) and is required for assessment, this will demonstrate the sequential and contextual nature of your learning; this combined with your reflective learning is called *synoptic* assessment.

Advice and feedback on your work and progress on projects is given at regular group tutorials, at peer assessment, in presentations and at one to one sign up surgeries – you will also have formal review points during the module. This is referred to as *Formative* feedback and is designed to help you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your work and what you can do to improve it.

All module assessments are based on 'coursework'. At the end of each module, you will receive a mark together with summary feedback on your achievement. This is referred to as *Summative* assessment and feedback.

Only work completed and assessed in final year (Level 6) contributes to your degree classification. In year's One and Two the studio modules and Design in Context module marks are presented to the Progression Board and the decision is made to progress students to the next year at this Board. If you do not pass a module, you may be provided with appropriate options according to university policy on progression in accordance with the assessment regulations.

10. **Course structure and curriculum**

The course is studied on a full-time (3 years) basis, with the option of a sandwich placement between years two and three.

Level 4 (Year 1)	Core / Optional	Credits
The Fundamentals of Graphic Design	Core	100
Design in Context 1	Core	20

Level 5 (Year 2)	Core / Optional	Credits
Exploring the Graphic Design Industry	Core	60
Design in Context 2	Core	20

Co-Lab: Research, Exploration and Risk-taking	Core	20
Material Encounters / Object Integration*	Optional	20
Storyboarding: Visualising the story, enhancing the narrative*	Optional	20
Motion Graphics*	Optional	20
Publishing: Experimental Formats*	Optional	20

* students must select 1 module (20 credits) from the suite of optional modules

Level 6 (Year 3 / 4)	Core / Optional	Credits
Developing a personal portfolio	Core	100
Design in Context 3: Dissertation	Core	20

Placement awards
Students undertaking the sandwich placement may achieve a Placement Diploma in Professional Practice, and students undertaking placements of shorter duration may be eligible for a Placement Certificate in Professional Practice.

Interim awards
Students who do not progress to the final stage may be eligible for an interim award of Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education or Ordinary Degree.

11. **Admission to the course**

   Entry requirements.
   For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the NTU course information web page.

12. **Support for learning**

   The School is committed to assisting you to achieve the best results possible during your studies, providing a wide range of academic and pastoral help and advice.   In addition to the course leader, module leaders and course administrator, a member of staff will also be assigned to you at the start of the course as your personal tutor.

   As part of your Induction, you will be introduced to the Student Handbook which includes information on how to access Employability Services, Disability Services, Fees and Student Finance Services, the Student Union, Health and Wellbeing Services, International Students Support, Study Support and Individual Support.

   At the beginning of the course, you will take part in induction activities to introduce you to your fellow students and to the course structure.

   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, both informally and formally.

13. **Graduate destinations/employability**

From the very start of the course, you will be encouraged to identify with the world of work and your future beyond graduation. Through our visiting speakers and guest speakers, all students have the chance to hear advice and personal experience from well-known professionals (some of them our NTU graduates) who represent every aspect of contemporary design practice. Further activities take place in year two that are designed to encourage research into employment opportunities and help prepare you for participation in live project briefs and work experience placements.

The course has a dedicated Professional Experience Tutor and the School's Employability team also provide a range of support and guidance including career talks, workshops and one to one drop-in sessions. You may also have the opportunity to attend NTU's 'Leap' Creative Industries Expo.

During final year, you are encouraged to negotiate project choices that align with your personal direction or chosen area of interest within graphic design. This ensures that you build up a portfolio of work that reflects your interest in the subject and your intentions beyond graduation. You will be offered the opportunity to attend portfolio surgeries with industry professionals in our studios, and (usually) at an event hosted by the course at venue in London. This gives you the chance to rehearse your presentation and interview skills in a more formal environment and is also a useful networking opportunity.

In year 2 and 3 you will also attend a careers symposium where alumni from our course and other industry professionals will discuss their career pathways – this will provide valuable insight and advice in support of your knowledge and awareness of contemporary professional practice.

The active involvement of a range of employers and visiting professionals setting short projects for students provides invaluable experience of working with an external client. It also offers an opportunity to make contact with employers for future opportunities such as work experience placements/internships. In your final year, you will get the chance to meet up with guest speakers after their lectures for portfolio advice and discussion, which will help to further your understanding of the graphic design industry, and to make decisions about your future career focus.

The course has an excellent reputation for employment, with many students securing jobs at well-known national and regional design consultancies. Other students choose to use their well-developed interpersonal skills in alternative fields such as teaching, design/account management, strategy, and to develop freelance careers. A number of students move on to setting up their own businesses, and some decide to continue their studies at postgraduate level.

Recent graduates are now working in a range of design consultancies across the broad spectrum of graphic design including:

- Branding
- Editorial
- Illustration
- Information Design
- Interactive Design
- Motion Graphics
- Typography
- Publishing

14. Course standards and quality

There are well-established systems for overseeing the quality of the curriculum within the School.

Module feedback questionnaires and annual surveys are used to gather feedback from students on their learning experiences.

Termly course committee meetings, attended by student representatives and academic staff, provide opportunities to raise and discuss matters contributing to the quality, standards and continuing development of the course.

The outcomes of the above inform an annual report highlighting positive features and areas to address which are further included in a course development plan. The plan is monitored through course committees and students have the opportunity to talk through the impact of any changes made.

Informally, course and individual tutorials additionally provide a further means of gathering student feedback and enable staff to address matters as soon as they arise.

Externally, the School consult with industry representatives as part of the course review and development process to ensure continued relevance of the curriculum to the creative and cultural industries. An external examiner is appointed to provide advice and monitor the academic standards of the course and student achievement in relation to those standards.

15.	**Assessment regulations** This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16A of the Quality Handbook).

16.	**Additional information**	
	Collaborative partner(s):	
	Course referenced to national (QAA) Benchmark Statements:	Art and Design (2017)
	Course recognised by:	
	NTIC progression route(s):	Foundation Certificate in Art, Design & Media
	Date this course specification approved:	DAG 15/11/19
	Any additional information:	