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 Graphic Design Theory and Practice
		Part-time
4.	Normal Duration:	Two Years
5.	UCAS Code:	n/a

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

Graphic design helps create the visual landscape of 21st century living; leading edge graphic media leads change, in the way we perceive and interact with the things we consume, the information we need and the way we are entertained. Increasingly, the boundaries overlap, between graphics and other areas of design, creating great opportunities for original thinking and visual innovation.

On this course, you will have the opportunity to study all aspects of graphic design, including branding, illustration, motion graphics or a blend of visual communication subjects that will lead you to create your own distinctive profile as a designer/academic.

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.

This part-time MA is concerned with the research, development and production of creative, original and effective design 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/or 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 this MA is to be open-minded: we do not seek to define graphic design; instead we encourage you to look at the possibilities it offers for original new thought, interpretation, creativity and innovation. The course is an opportunity to develop an advanced practice within visual communications, to explore and understand the relationships between its theory and practice, its role and relevance in contemporary society, and to develop a unique understanding of the contexts that comprise this exciting and dynamic arena.

You will study the breadth of your subject through the research, development, testing and production of one, or more, in-depth project. The projects will be negotiated around your personal aims for extending your practice and with the aims of the module.

This course offers you two study options:

Option A - 180 credit module 'Graphic Design: Theory and Practice'

Option B - 160 credit module 'Graphic Design: Theory and Practice (option B)' + 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 will be taking a 20 credit point module that covers advanced research, there will be no requirement to include in depth research into methodology as part of the 160 credit point module as this will be covered in the 20 credit module. You will be asked to decide which option you wish you take in the middle of the first part of the course, and your supervisor will discuss your choices with you.

This MA course is designed to encourage both personal and professional development. Through negotiated project work, and research into the broader territory of a chosen field, each individual student will gain a distinctive profile.

As a part time student, you will be expected to be self-motivated and capable of working and studying under your own direction. The part-time route is flexible, to enable you to study in between other commitments. However, there are key timetabled sessions that will enable you to benefit from interacting and learning alongside others.

Part-time students are welcome to attend any available events within Visual Communications, but we understand if their professional or personal commitments preclude this. Your project should therefore be designed to cope with your own time commitments; the course being flexible to this personalisation of your learning. Therefore, the part time mode of study asks students to plot an individual pathway towards a Masters. Through negotiation, you will be able to combine studies of theory and practice to achieve your own professional profile. According to your needs or personal aims, you can engage in purely practice based projects to enhance your employability as designers, work in partnership with your employers on CPD projects or build up a research profile for academic employment or further studies.

You will be treated as mature, independent, individual designers, with personal responsibility for your own learning aims and career planning. Meetings and

presentations are conducted in a friendly and professional manner, with time managed and deadlines met in an efficient way. Through this business-like approach to studies, you become well prepared for the world of work or further studies.

This course is located in the subject area of Visual Communication with the School of Art & Design. To encourage and enable interaction and cross-fertilization between related subjects in the Visual Communications community, some lectures, seminars and workshops are shared with students studying Graphic Design, Branding and Identity and Illustration.

All our Masters courses aim to foster a risk-taking approach to theory and practice. You are encouraged to challenge conventions, to develop a strong personal viewpoint and to use your imagination creatively. The course offers a broad scope for experimentation, originality and innovative thinking.

| 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. |

| | **Knowledge and understanding** |
| | By the end of the course you should be able to: |

- Evaluate a range of advanced research methods and research methodologies to identify appropriate approaches for your specialist line of enquiry in your chosen field (B)

- Use structured, creative problem solving theories relevant in devising advanced creative strategies for your specialism (B)

- Critically evaluate professional design and production techniques and systems

- Research, evaluate and explain current and emerging debates, at the forefront of international graphic design research or practice (B)

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

- Develop advanced knowledge of the theory and practice of graphic design, through critical evaluation and reflection (B)

- Propose negotiate and develop bespoke project and personal development aims reflecting upon your current practice and professional development (B)

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

| | **Skills, qualities and attributes** |
| | By the end of the course you should be able to: |

- Demonstrate advanced research skills and innovative research practices and apply them to your specialist enquiry (B)

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

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

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

- Develop bespoke project development outcomes, which are informed by current and emerging international research and debate at the forefront of your chosen specialism (B)

- Challenge conventions in the development and design of innovative creative strategies and solutions

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

- Design and deliver verbal, written or visual presentations, which show your advanced knowledge and skills in graphic design theory and practice.

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

Tutorials are opportunities to present work in progress and to receive feedback and advice on the further development of projects. At each tutorial you will receive written feedback and you will also agree goals to be achieved for the next tutorial. You may also receive presentations, workshops and seminars on topics common to professional and academic theories and practices of graphic design.

The timetable for mandatory events will be published prior to the commencement of the course to enable you to make arrangements with employers, or to fit in with other personal activities. Part-time students are, of course, welcome to attend any event, but again we understand if professional or personal commitments preclude your attendance. Your project should therefore be designed to cope with your own time commitments; the course being flexible to this personalisation of your learning

You will learn independently by doing, by reflecting and by discussion with peer groups through on-site and perhaps on-line events. You will learn by selecting and using problem solving strategies, and by analysing your own work and setting your own aims for improvement.

Throughout the course you are required to keep a Journal of Professional Practice, in which you will outline your learning aims, reflect on your progress and record feedback that you received from peers and staff. You will also use this journal to respond to research tasks, which you will be set by your supervisor.

Within this Journal you will also be able to reflect on the various industry professionals that are invited to contribute to our postgraduate Visual Communication courses, giving you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the cross-fertilization that occurs within this 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.)

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.

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Written formative feedback will be given at the conclusion of each of the first two consecutive phases to support you in developing your knowledge and skills as you progress through the course. The formative feedback will focus on your level of achievement to date, and offer advice on how to continue to develop your work.

Summative assessment of your final project will occur at the end of the course.

During each phase, 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.

Creative Research and Development

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.

Creative Development and Testing

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 graphic design practice in response to the methodological and philosophical underpinning of research practice.

Design for Production and Media

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 Graphic Design (equivalent to 60 credit points at Masters level), or Postgraduate Diploma in Graphic Design (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**

The part-time Masters in Graphic Design, Theory and Practice is of two years in duration (90 weeks) and commences in September, finishing in the July of the second year.

MA Graphic Design Theory and Practice PT:			
Option A **Graphic Design Theory and Practice** 90 weeks 180 credits	*Option B* **Graphic Design Theory and Practice (Option B)** 90 weeks 160 credits		**Year One** Sept - July
		Option B **Advanced Art and Design Research** 30 weeks 20 credits	**Year Two** Sept - July

Creative Research and Development

During the first part of the course you will work on a self-negotiated Masters Project Proposal. To support the development of your proposal, you may be given short assignments set by staff, to help establish good practice in Masters learning methods, and to foster sound approaches to research and enquiry and also to ensure clarity for students choosing to take either a practice or theoretical approach to their subject.

Depending on your project, you will study the important relationship between creative research and idea development, plus general Graphic Design problem solving systems. As an alternative, you may choose to study your specialist area from a more theoretical perspective. You will study and apply research, analysis and, or, theoretical development, and you will also begin to define your personal aims as a future professional.

You may attend group tutorials and make presentations of your work in progress, to take and to give constructive criticism and stimulate debate about the subject. With support from supervisors and peers, you will research and develop your main Masters project ready for presentation and review at the end of the phase.

By the middle of this section of the course you will be asked to make a decision to continue on the 180 credit module, or to study the 160/20 credit combination and your supervisor will support you in making this choice.

During this section you are expected to have applied a range of research methods in gaining a new understanding of knowledge in graphic design. You will also have developed a valid proposition for an in-depth project, which has the potential for exploring graphic design in ways which will extend your scope as a practitioner, researcher, writer or teacher.

Creative Development and Testing

You will continue to develop, test and eventually consolidate your previously researched and developed Masters proposal. You will foster a challenging or experimental approach, either to the exploration of visual practices or to critical debates and commentary in your specialist subject. You will foster an experimental approach, stretching the boundaries of existing thought and practice to explore originality and innovation. You will also conduct regular testing of the interim stages of idea developments, using appropriate methods of research and evaluation.

You may continue to attend group tutorials and useful seminars and workshops. Also, in this phase you will be encouraged to enhance your studies by engaging in valid field and primary research, making connections with professionals, arranging short internships and studio visits.

During this part of the course you might also take a 20 credit point module called 'Advanced Art and Design Research' taught between April and December of year 2 which will run alongside the 160 credit point module option.

Design for Production and Media

The last part of the course asks you to develop and complete your Masters project. For practice work, you are expected to show knowledge and skills in professional, commercial processes and production, and to provide a showcase for your personal, creative thinking, original visual skills and mastery of graphic design techniques.

Through research, you will learn about and apply, where practical, the technologies, processes and production methods that are appropriate for the completion and distribution of your main Masters project. Developing a sound understanding of the opportunities that media and technologies offer the graphic designer, along with an understanding of the demands of production processes, will provide you with a high employability profile. For written research-oriented projects, you will be expected to produce finished outcomes, which extend the scope of academic or critical discourses, through the use of media, technologies or other enhancements to the dissemination of knowledge.

Whatever your mode of studying Masters in Graphic Design, it is important that you demonstrate a high level of competency in managing resources and in planning your time efficiently to achieve deadlines. Where relevant, you will also show informed consideration of issues relating to ethical and sustainable practices.

A strong commitment to applying original, personal interpretations of project work is expected, demonstrating a willingness to be innovative and to challenge conventions, while ensuring credible, functional solutions.

The complete body of work consisting of practical and theoretical work will be submitted for assessment. You will give a final verbal and visual presentation of project development and outcomes. You will also design and create a final exhibition of your Master's project work.

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.

Applicants who wish to take a practice-based approach 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.

Those who wish to pursue a research or theoretical mode of study should send in three examples of written work and a proposal for the research of a particular topic.

All proposals should describe aims and objectives for developing your own practice through undertaking the MA; this should include an explanation of how your proposal relates to your plans for further study or professional development.

Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

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 Academic Standards and Quality Handbook
	Additional Information Collaborative partner(s): None Course referenced to national QAA Masters Degree Characteristics 2010 Benchmark Statements: Course recognised by: None Date 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: