Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

	Basic Course Information	
1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	School of Art and Design/City campus
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	BA (Hons) Graphic Design Full-time
4.	Normal Duration:	3 years
5.	UCAS Code:	W211

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

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 and which 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, Packaging and Typography. After a thorough initial introduction to the basic 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. Throughout the course you will be fully supported in your ambitions to acquire the kind of technical and thinking skills you will need, on your way to becoming 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 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 is fortunate to have strong, constructive links with some of the best professional practitioners and thinkers in the UK 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 business. We also collaborate with professional designers who set short projects helping you to gain experience of working in a professional context, and you are encouraged to enter national and international design competitions. Students from the course regularly gain national recognition

for the quality of their work, and have consistently won national student awards including; New Designers, Design & Art Directors (D&AD), YCN (You Can Now), the Penguin Design Award and the International Society for Typography Design (ISTD).

To further enhance your employability profile, the School of Art and Design encourages all students to engage in some form of national and international competitions and work experience placement at some point in their studies. Graphic Design students are fully supported in this activity during Year Two, and the course offers an impressive list of top commercial contacts to approach. 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, photography and filmmaking, publishing, motion design, typography and art direction

The course enables you to bring your ideas to life and to achieve the highest resolution; 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. Young designers need to understand the background to economic, technological and ethical debates 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.

Summary of 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.

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:

- 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.

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

- 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, 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.	**Teaching and Learning Methods**

The Graphic Design course promotes multidisciplinary, 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 each other and with staff. 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 through the use of 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. There is usually an opportunity to go abroad on a field trip to one of the great cities of culture and if for any reason you cannot attend, then alternative learning experiences will be discussed with you.

In Year One you will be initially enabled to focus on the development of your design process, which will assist you in developing your research, thinking and visualisation skills. You will experience a range of learning opportunities working in small groups with both self-directed work and industry-facing projects, developing and emphasising your personal 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.

In Year Two, to help you to begin to focus on the wider professional context and begin to 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.

Some students take the opportunity in year two to participate in the Erasmus international study exchange scheme and spend a term of their studies in a similar institution in Europe. 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 held in a top London venue where industry professionals are invited to view your work, offering further opportunity for contacts and networking.

In summary, your learning on the course will take place through a variety of methods including:
- Studio activities
- Peer groups
- Independent learning
- Lectures
- Workshops
- Seminars
- Group tutorials
- One-to-one surgeries
- Portfolio reviews
- Work based learning
- Live projects
- '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**

Formative assessment and feedback points take place 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 an indication as to 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.

All work completed across both modules in each year will be assessed. Two key elements influence the assessment process on 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 sketchbook work that demonstrates the evolution and development of final idea presentation is required for assessment, they should also 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 and also at 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'. There are no other types of assessments such as examinations for example. 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. You will be provided with written Summative feedback at the end of year's One and Two (Levels 4 and 5).

Only work completed and assessed in final year (Level 6) contribute 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.

Assessment is conducted according to the School policy 'Assessment and Feedback Principles and Guidelines' which ensures the academic standards, and their appropriateness, are made clear to you.

10.	**Course structure and curriculum**

The course is full time over three years, each year comprising three terms. Modules covering aspects of both theory and practice run across each year, with the Dissertation module running over half of the third year. Modules are fully integrated to provide a cohesive and constructive experience. You will also be encouraged to consider graphic design as an aspect of the broader creative environment that is continually evolving in response to social, cultural and technological developments.

Year One (Level 4) (120 credit points):

The Fundamentals of Graphic Design (100 credit points)
Design in Context 1 (20 credit points)

The Fundamentals of Graphic Design module will introduce you to the development of fundamental principles such as:
- Concept research
- Visual idea generation
- Problem solving
- Visual language
- Materials and forms
- Type and Image
- Cultural theory
- Design Developmental Process

You will also benefit from introductions to industry standard technology and creative software for all aspects of contemporary design, including interactive and motion graphics. You will gain these various skills and understandings through working on a variety of different length projects, which form a sequence of learning which demands a sustained engagement throughout each module.

Projects encourage an individual approach to study, and project briefs enable you to develop your creative thinking through problem solving, visualising and mark-making skills while gaining a working knowledge of appropriate tools and practices. By the end of the first year you will have had opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of industry standard software.

The practical studio-based activities, supported by a course of informative lectures and discussions highlighting design issues, historical influences, and professional practice, all support the development of contextual understanding for your practical project work.

You will also have a chance to develop your own personal and sustainable, development plan with particular reference to global aspects of the design professions, beginning to define your employability profile.

Year Two (Level 5) (120 credit points):

Exploring the Professional Context and Personal Direction (100 credit points)
Design in Context 2 (20 credit points)

The Exploring Personal Direction and Professional Context module will help you build on the fundamentals you have learnt in year one. The focus is therefore increasingly placed on your commitment to gaining a professional approach and developing an understanding of the audience for your 'client' and your design work. You will look in greater detail at specific target groups and begin using more appropriate methods and media to communicate messages. You will undertake projects and other activities that will require you to explore specialist areas of design.

At this point in the course, you will start to make important personal choices. While covering the subject areas previously mentioned, you'll have a variety of projects to choose from, including the chance to enter some national competitions and to get involved in some real (or simulated) 'client' briefs, organised with industry partners. These can help you define and further clarify your chosen career path and also act as an important platform for networking, in order to obtain employment after you graduate. These projects are designed to develop your theoretical understanding and to support you in making informed choices as you continue to develop a more individual, independent portfolio of work in preparation for final year. The live client brief brings your employability skills into sharp focus, defining and preparing you for working as a graphic designer. You will also begin to develop your own personal, and sustainable, development plan referencing the globalisation of design.

The 'Design in Context 2' module provides different learning opportunities. It gives some choice for making selections between 'live' client projects, which offers opportunities for you to experience a possible specialist area of interest. With staff guidance, you will draw on the knowledge and experience you have so far gained to select or negotiate project briefs that exploit areas you have shown ability and understanding in. This is to gain confidence within the subject, and to begin to develop your own personal 'voice' and graphic language within your chosen field.

There may be the opportunity for cross year student mentors, from year three, to provide a bridge between year two and three.

<u>Year Three (Level 6)</u> (120 credit points):

Developing a Personal Portfolio (100 credit points)
Design in Context 3: Dissertation (20 credit points)

The 'Developing a Personal Portfolio' module aims to develop your portfolio of creative work helping you to prepare for industry or post-graduate study. This final year's module consists up of an interesting and varied range of set, live and competition briefs that will further expand your specialisation or will engage you in a broader range of design work. You will also have the opportunity to develop your own negotiated briefs, allowing you creative freedom to fine-tune your portfolio.

The 'Design in Context 3: Dissertation' module enables you to develop and deliver a self-initiated written research topic relating to contemporary visual communication and culture.

In summary, throughout the course, the 'Design in Context' theoretical modules are linked to practical work through lectures and/or seminars. Essays and presentations are produced in Year One & Two (Levels 4 and 5), followed by a self-initiated dissertation in final year (Level 6).

During this year, you should also finalise your own personal, and sustainable, development plan that engages with the global practice of design. This planning will enable you to comprehensively reflect on, assess synoptically, and define your own employability skills thus preparing you for work as a professional designer or design academic.

At the conclusion of your degree, you will exhibit your work in the School of Art and Design degree shows. This highly valued event offers you the chance to celebrate your achievements and to make useful contacts with potential employers. In addition, some students will have the opportunity to take part in high profile graduate shows in London, such as D&AD New Blood and New Designers. Both events showcase the best graduates from universities around the country and provide the opportunity to win awards and meet prospective employers.

11.	**Admission to the course**

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 with us, providing a wide range of academic help and advice. The School provides a comprehensive learner support system that includes input from the university and student union, and can be tailored to meet your own support needs. You will be given a personal tutor at the start of your year who can act as a guide in more personal matters. Year tutors and module leaders have academic and pastoral roles, and they can also be the first point of contact if you have any difficulties.

Problems that require specialist support are referred to an appropriate member of the NTU Student Support Services team.

The course strategy on academic guidance seeks to develop greater autonomy for you as you move through the three levels, and regular group tutorials also provide you with peer support for learning.

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. During Year One your written work is monitored for undiagnosed dyslexia, and sometimes students are referred for further testing if required.

Your student handbook will contain details of the support available to you should there be an interruption in your studies, due to circumstances outside of your control, or through other factors affecting your academic performance.

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. Group tutorials are also an important opportunity to note the feedback that you are getting from your tutors and fellow students and are seen as an important part of the feedback mechanism in the School of Art and Design.

NTU's Online Workspace is referred to as 'NOW'. All course and module information is posted on this site for you to access at any time.

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 work experience placement.

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 also be offered opportunities to present your portfolio to employers, usually at an event hosted by the course at a well-known London venue. This gives you the chance to rehearse your presentation and interview skills in a more formal environment and is also a useful networking occasion. You also have access to guidance at drop-in sessions run by the NTU Employability team.

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. In final year, you will often get the chance to meet up with guest speakers after the lecture for portfolio advice and discussion, which will help to further your understand 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, management, and freelance careers. A number of students move on to setting up their own businesses or working freelance, 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

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 which meets three times a year. There are opportunities for students 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.

An External Examiner is appointed and whose job it is to make judgements about the course and report on the standards achieved 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's 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 to this written by the course team and the Course Committee.

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.

15.	**Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in NTU Quality Handbook, Section 16A: Common Assessment Regulations for Bachelor's and Integrated Master's Degrees).

16.	**Additional Information**	
	Collaborative partner(s):	N/A
	Course referenced to national QAA Benchmark Statements:	Art and Design (February 2017)
	Course recognised by:	Chartered Society of Designers (CSD) and Creative Skillset (CSS)
	Date implemented:	1 September 2018

Key features of the course:

- A broad-based curriculum that allows students to explore and experience the full range of disciplines within the subject of graphic design.
- A focus on ideas, individuality and professionalism ensures the employability of our graduates.
- Strong links with industry and the opportunity to undertake live briefs as part of the curriculum.
- Participation in national and international competitions.