

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information

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| 1. | Awarding Institution: | Nottingham Trent University |
| 2. | School/Campus: | School of Art & Design/City Campus |
| 3. | Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study: | BA (Hons) Theatre Design FT SW |
| 4. | Normal Duration: | 3 Years, SW 4 years |
| 5. | UCAS Code: | W460 |

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

Theatre Design is a creative discipline involving imagination, intellectual rigour, interpretation and many skills in realising visual narratives for a performance context.

Theatre Designers are artists who work collaboratively with other performance disciplines and respond with equal enthusiasm to words, performance and research as to painting, sculpture, objects, clothes and architecture. As a designer you are responsible for the visual realisation of theatre production and performance, employing creative, technical, communicative and managerial skills with resourcefulness, intelligence and energy.

During the three years of study, you will have the chance to acquire all these skills, and to develop them into focused projects. Live industry based projects take a large part of what you will do, working with our associate institutions and companies. These experiences will allow you to work independently, providing a foundation for a successful professional practice in a changing environment.

Since 1973, the Theatre Design course covers all aspects of contemporary theatre design practice, is focused on design for the visual aspects of performance and provides an opportunity to gain high levels of skills and knowledge in a range of different contexts. The Course allows you to explore this diversity in a highly integrated and challenging course of study, preparing you for a wide range of professional and post graduate opportunities including: design for set and costume, design for performance, design for Dance and Opera, design for Found Spaces, Puppetry, Exhibitions and Installations for Heritage Sites, community and educational theatre design, construction and manipulation, lighting design, projection and technical arts.

The curriculum reflects contemporary thought and practice within an internationalised art and design school and is accredited by CSD Chartered Society of Designers. You are supported to think and act as responsible artists, reflecting the culturally diverse world we inhabit, and making considered and ethical choices in your speculative and realised designs.

The course has strong and embedded links with the theatre industry and allied professional practitioners in UK and abroad. You will develop relevant professional attributes gained through professional experiences embedded into the design, learning and assessment of your course across all three years. For example, in the second year, through a work based learning experience which has been established as a distinctive feature of the course for more than four decades.

During all three years, you'll gain specific skills and experiences required for a professional practice in Theatre Design. These will include technical and health and safety inductions to equipment and processes, followed by workshops and seminars in technical drawing, use of appropriate software and industry relevant CAD skills, experiences in specialised techniques and technologies, Contextual studies, research, critical thinking, reflection and evaluation skills.

You will be encouraged to seek and complete work experience with the opportunity to gain an additional Diploma or Certificate in Professional Practice, dependent on the duration of placement.

All these experiences will be evaluated and included in your academic portfolio to contextualise your professional skills. In the final year you will have the opportunity to work with one of our collaborating companies which include significant national and regional theatre companies who contribute to year three design projects. This will give you the experience of working with the industry professionals and also contribute to the development of your professional community. Many students have achieved employment, commissions and funding through these professional connections.

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:

- Create work that is underpinned by a rigorous approach to research from a variety of contexts. (B)

- Integrate and apply your knowledge of appropriate historical, social, economic and cultural contexts within your work. (B)
- Analyse and creatively interpret how problems, texts and contexts within the design process impact upon performance. (B)
- Develop an individual, innovative and creative response to problems, texts and contexts as demanded by your projects. (B)
- Critically evaluate your understanding of performance and its global context including the use of technologies in historical, contemporary and emerging contexts.(B)
- Complete a focused research project which extends your academic and professional perspective of performance practice. (B)
- Evaluate your work with consideration of the changing professional context and account for your ethical and social responsibility in a global context. (B)

Skills, qualities and attributes

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

- Integrate advanced craft skills and technologies, selectively applying a range of 2D, 3D and interactive media to your design projects.(B)
- Initiate, manage and evaluate your own work process and that of others. (B)
- Communicate effectively within specific professional contexts, using appropriate spoken, written and visual media. (B)
- Operate and manage safely within professional, technical and safety protocols appropriate to design and performance projects and contexts. (B)
- Create and maintain a personal portfolio which evidences your developing skill and professionalism as related to your chosen career destination.

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, also supported by the School's Assessment and Feedback Principles and Guidelines.

On BA (Hons) Theatre Design you will encounter a wide range of teaching and learning methods, including lectures, seminars, workshops, group and individual tutorials. These are integrated into theatre design projects

which integrate text and context, practical and professional skills and design interpretation into an investigation of a specific aspect of design for performance.

In the First Year you will undertake a series of projects each looking at a specific performance context and developing particular skills which at the end of the year gives you a secure foundation in theatre design as a practice.

In the Second Year you will selectively explore a range of projects and approaches to the process of designing for performance, each will allow you to focus in more depth on the specifics of a particular design approach, craft & audience.

In the Third Year you will negotiate your programme of study choosing from professionally aligned projects offered by the Course in association with industry partners, and/or devising your own projects which respond to a clearly defined audience.

Throughout the three years the course will also prepare you for investigating your own research project, and help you to develop confidence in analytical, reflective and evaluative writing developing your ability to communicate ideas in written, visual and verbal forms.

As a part of your learning experience, you will be offered a coaching support through your live project and working experiences opportunities. After a common first year, you will have the opportunity to undertake a work based learning placement, and in the final year you will be able to personalise your learning experience choosing a range of projects that offer different roles related to the professional practice.

The design process is underpinned by studio teaching through different modes:

In the design studio you will engage in the speculative process of interpreting texts or concepts into designs for performance in the form of models, drawings, technical specifications and/or digital artefacts.

In the studio theatre, scenic workshop and wardrobe, you will engage with the process of design and making performance in live and full scale contexts. In the first year you will be inducted into a range of methods and approaches, including puppetry, performance, scenic art and props, costume making, lighting and projection.

You will also be encouraged to work with organisations and situations outside the University undertaking projects which interface with different audiences, communities and industries. In the first year these will be highly structured “tasters” built into projects. In the second year these will be specific aspects of projects which focus on particular audiences for your work. In the third year these will become the focus of the work itself, whether in the form of speculative and realised design projects developed with one of our collaborating theatre companies, independent design projects orientated to a specific audience context, and Major Research Project in which you consider the future of theatre design practice itself.

In order for you to fully understand your own design practice, it is crucial to critically reflect on the process. All projects integrate theory with practice to enable you to focus on your development as a professional designer and performance maker, in a range of contexts. A programme of theatre visits, lectures and screenings of Contextual Studies Modules (year one and two) and Major Research Project (year three), enable you to understand some of the different contexts for design and performance and stimulate your thinking about the possibilities for your own practice. Presentations, seminars and critiques are situations where you discuss and elaborate your work in a wider professional context, and receive peer and tutor feedback on your design thinking.

You will maintain a portfolio which records all your work on the course, which serves as a means of tracking and evaluating the specific progress you are making, and to look at the evolution of your personal design practice.

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 the award.

The course embeds employability throughout; employability sessions extend the professional contextualisation of your design and performance practice. This will focus on developing deeper knowledge and competencies required for professional practice. The seminars also help

you to refine your academic portfolio into a professionally focused graduate portfolio which will frame your abilities for your future employment.

The synoptic assessment enables you to reflect on your skills, experiences and activities throughout the course in relation to your future employability. You will be engaged in learning core employability skills and career planning activities developed in association with the NTU Employability Team. In the final year, you will have the chance to exhibit your work and meet industry professionals during NTU Degree Show, Theatre Design Industry Day and external final year exhibition.

9. **Assessment methods**

During the course you will generate a variety of different projects, each will have a specific brief. All briefed projects are assessed and moderated by project tutors against the module learning outcomes by using the assessment criteria. You will be required to submit a variety of outcomes and assessment methods for the different modules, including speculative designs, live performances, artefacts, costume garments, presentations & written reflective and critically evaluative reports and essays. You will have opportunities to talk about your work either via a formal presentation or in a group crit.

In addition to receiving on-going formative feedback, at the end of each project you will have a feedback tutorial with the project tutor to review the outcomes of the project. Before the tutorial you will complete a self-assessment using the assessment criteria. Your tutor will also complete an assessment using the same criteria. These two documents will provide the basis for a focused discussion on your achievements and development needs. This will result in a set of objectives which will inform your onward professional development as you progress through the course. You will also take on projects of increasing complexity and specialisation, this process aims to help you to make judgements about your choices. This builds towards a negotiated learning agreement in the third year where you will set out a programme of work including a set of agreed personal learning objectives for the year, against the module learning outcomes, which will provide a focus for your third year assessment.

Summative assessments take place at the end of each module. The academic team assess by evaluating your practical and theoretical outcomes against the learning outcomes.

The course conforms to the Common Assessment Regulations for undergraduate courses (Section 16A of the University's Quality Handbook).

Assessment is conducted according to the School's 'Assessment and Feedback: Principles and Guidelines' and ensures that the assessment process and standards are made clear to you. The course annually updates its own 'Assessment and Feedback Plan' which includes the details of how you will be assessed and the hand in dates etc. and this is available on NOW and will be introduced to you during induction. The final degree award is based solely on the work produced during the final year of the course.

Towards the end of the course, you will also 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 aspirations.

Failing a module

If for any reason you fail a module, you will be provided with referral and retrieval options as determined by the Board of Examiners or the Progression Board. These decisions are informed by the University's Common Assessment Regulations and the course team's academic judgment.

Progression to the next level requires the successful completion of 120 credit points (with the potential for carrying a maximum of 20 credits only through to level 5 that would need to be recovered during that academic session). If a student does not meet the course learning outcomes then, in line with the school's holistic assessment policy, the body of work will be reassessed against the interim (fall-back) award learning outcomes for an ordinary degree (equivalent to a minimum of 60 credits being achieved in the final year of the degree).

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

Throughout the rest of the Course you will select projects and approaches which enable you to develop a specialised practice founded on your interests and strengths. Through engaging with a range of design and performance outputs you will develop a clear understanding of the requirements and possibilities of different approaches to designing for performance. These will be presented through performances, exhibitions, photo-shoots, in order to enable peer dialogue which informs your personal and professional development.

Introduction to Theatre Design 100 credits – Year One

You will be introduced to the key principles, skills, practices and thinking which describe contemporary theatre design practice including: design for stage and costume; scenic arts and set construction; costume design, interpretation and construction; puppetry design, construction and manipulation; lighting, projection and technical arts and design for performance.

You will also explore the visual, technical and professional skills and experiences required for a professional practice in Theatre Design. These will include technical and health and safety inductions to equipment and processes, followed by workshops and major research classes in expressive and technical drawing, use of appropriate software, experiences in specialised techniques and technologies. These will be recorded in your portfolio which will serve as a professional record of your professional skills and competencies for future employability.

Contextual Studies 1 20 credits – Year One

This module will engage you with theatre history, theory, philosophy, culture, and contemporary practice. It will help you to develop confidence in reflective and evaluative writing (whatever your previous experience of academic writing). It will prepare you throughout the year for investigating your own research project, which will pave the way to further research in Years 2 and 3. You will develop your ability to communicate ideas in written, visual and verbal form (in research, process and design intentions), enhancing design projects undertaken in the main module, and developing a wider understanding of theatre and its applications.

Theatre Design Explorations 100 credits – Year Two

The aims of this module are to enable you to develop an emerging practice in theatre design through selecting and exploring different projects and experiences. These will include for example, developing industry relevant CAD skills and the opportunity to undertake a work based learning placement.

This process of exploration is diagnostic. You will reflect upon and evaluate your decisions and experiences in order to develop your knowledge, skills and confidence as a theatre design practitioner.

You will select projects and approaches which enable you to develop your practical understanding of the relationship between design, craft and performance and a clear understanding of the requirements and possibilities of different audiences, spaces and contexts.

You will undertake a work based learning placement where you will work under professional supervision and this experience will be evaluated and included in your portfolio to contextualise your professional skills.

Contextual Studies 2 20 credits – Year Two

This module enables you to build on the skills you gained in Year One, developing your knowledge and understanding of live performance contexts, and of the wider historical, arts, cultural, and political context for your work. You'll develop analytical, critical, reflective and evaluative skills, working on two Individual Research Projects, presented during the year through a variety of communication methods (verbal, visual, and written).

Theatre Design Exposition 120 credits – Year Three

The Exposition module will allow you to refine your research based learning, design specialisms and presentational skills in the context of anticipated professional practice.

Third Year Projects offer an immersive design learning experience where you integrate the learning from the previous two years into focused projects with a specific audience focus. These will normally include Speculative Design Projects, Realised Design Projects and a Major Research Project.

Professional practice seminars in the third year further extend this professional contextualisation of your design and performance practice

looking at knowledge and competencies required for professional practice, and to look at what the future of the profession might look like. The seminars also help you to refine your academic portfolio into a professionally focused portfolio which will frame your abilities for your future employment.

The course embeds employability throughout. Early in the course you will be engaged in learning core employability skills and career planning activity.

The course includes a number of opportunities for you to undertake work like contexts or engage with external opportunities, professional-led projects, activities with employer involvement, and you will produce work that is held to professional standards.

Towards the end of the course, through a synoptic assessment, you will be asked to reflect on your experiences, activities and skills in relation to your future professional/employability aspirations.

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 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 who you can communicate with on more personal matters.

At the start of your course you will be invited to participate in an 'induction week' where you will undertake a range of activities that will introduce many of the key facilities available within the University and will also provide you with an essential introduction to the Course. You will meet the staff and your fellow students and will be able to find out more about how you will be taught and assessed on your course. At the same time, the Student's Union organise their social events in 'welcome week' that will encourage you to become involved in and meet people from the wider NTU community.

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.

NTU's Online Workspace is referred to as 'NOW'. The 'NOW' encourages students to take responsibility for your learning. All course and module information is uploaded for ease of access when you are working on or off site.

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. Some of the feedback that you will receive is formal and will occur both during the module (formative) when you will receive written feedback and an indicative grade and at the end of the module (summative) which is confirmed by the Board of Examiners. In addition to this, group and individual tutorials are an important informal opportunity to receive feedback from fellow students and your tutors. 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. These sessions are to support you with both academic and pastoral matters. You might also discuss other issues including ways in which you might continue to develop your general skills and preparing ahead for your next career steps.

Academic guidance is given in the supervision sessions and is tailored to individual student needs. For international students, the Language Centre provides tailored sessions that all students whose English isn't their first language are encouraged to attend.

13. Graduate destinations/employability

From early on in the course, you will practice and obtain core skills and begin your career planning activities that will enhance your employability.

The course offers placement opportunities to enable you to experience working in professional contexts and identify how your course / practice sits within the creative and cultural industries.

In Final year, you will work on your actual industry projects alongside our collaborating companies and experienced theatre practitioners.

In final year, you will participate in a lecture and seminar programme on professional practice and create a graduate portfolio. At the point of the graduate exhibition, our Collaborating Artists review and advise on the graduate portfolio, as part of the final assessment. The synoptic assessment will require you to reflect on your skills, experiences and activities throughout the course in relation to your future plans.

The Course prepares graduates to work in a variety of different contexts where your abilities in designing for performance can be applied. Recent graduates have found employment in the following areas:

- Theatre Design & Design for Performance
- Set, Props and Costume construction
- Events and Festival Designers and Managers
- Teaching and Educational Work
- Film, Television and Production Management
- Postgraduate/further study

Examples of employers include:

- Nottingham Playhouse
- York Theatre Royal
- Birmingham Opera Company
- Sydney Opera House
- Royal Shakespeare Company
- Pinewood Studios
- BBC
- Rocket Scenery
- GameCity Festival

Students have also gone on to form successful performance companies, have presented performance work at international festivals, and achieved significant funding for shows, performances and public events.

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.

We would like you to contribute to the continuing development of this course and we welcome all feedback and have a number of ways in which we can formally and informally receive this. You will have an opportunity to put yourself forward to be considered as a course representative at the beginning of each of your years of study. As part of this role you will be invited to attend the course committee meetings that occur three times a year and contribute to the conversations and debate to support the continuing health of the course. Any issues brought up at the course committee meetings are reported to the school academic standards and quality committee and actions identified therefrom, with responses, will be reported back to you either via the next course committee meeting or via the NOW.

You will also be asked to give feedback on the modules via a questionnaire, referred to as 'EvaSys'. In addition to this, you have other formal channels where you can give feedback and these are at Staff/Student liaison meetings, Course Committee Meetings (CCM) and via school-level meetings.

An External Examiner is appointed 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.

15. **Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

16. **Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s): n/a
 Course referenced to Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Benchmark Statements: Course outcomes are referenced to the Quality Assurance Agency's benchmark statements for subjects in Art & Design 2017

Course recognised by: CSD Chartered Society of Designers; The course is also a member of OISTAT-International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians; ABTT-Association of British Theatre Technicians; ACTD-Association of Courses in Theatre Design and SBTD-Society of British Theatre Designers.

Date this course specification was formally approved by DAG: 24 July 2017
 DAG Approval for PCR Significant Modification Course Change

Last updated: May 2018 of SASQC approval
 SW mode of study introduced and approved by SASQC 3 July 2019

Any additional information:

- Integrated approach to Design, Craft and Performance.
- Longstanding industry focused work based learning scheme.
- Collaborating Company scheme contributing to Year Three teaching and offering graduate employment opportunities.