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Degree information

Course Title: BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Degree aims

- To widen access to Creative Arts Education at Undergraduate level through flexible supported open learning.
- To offer high quality and stimulating study material and tutor support through which students can develop a specialist understanding of graphic design practices.
- To provide flexibility for students to meaningfully establish their own creative voice and a personal and/or professional understanding of their practice.
- To develop autonomous learners capable of applying their skills, knowledge and understanding creatively within a range of contexts.

Emma Kelly, Graphic Design 1
Degree outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

Knowledge
• Demonstrate a personal creative voice through the use of creative, analytical, visual and practical skills, techniques and media.
• Articulate a critical and contextual understanding of contemporary graphic design practice and their location within it.

Understanding
• Generate creative ideas and solutions, adapting and translating them into outcomes that communicate effectively.
• Demonstrate informed and rigorous research, enquiry and reflection.

Application
• Select and apply creative, visual, technical and analytical skills in the realization and presentation of suitable ideas in response to a range of projects and/or contexts.
• Develop an autonomous, sustainable and reflective practice that can be applied to professional, post-graduate and/or personal development contexts.

Did you know?
As an Open College of the Arts student, you are eligible to apply for student discount such as NUS (www.nus.org.uk/en/) and Unidays (www.myunidays.com/). Visit this website to view more offers and discount codes www.studentbeans.com.
Degree structure

The diagram below shows the structure of the degree, and how many units you must study at each level. Use the Pathway on the next page to select the units you wish to study.
## Degree Pathway

### OCA Level 1 units (HE Level 4)
Total credits 120

You need three units at this Level
You need to undertake the following unit:

**Mandatory Units**
- Graphic Design 1: Core Concepts

Choose one or two units from below:

- *Book Design 1: Creative Book Design*
- *Visual skills 1: Visual Dynamics*

If you have chosen one unit from above choose one from below:

- *Book Design 1: Artists’ Books*
- Illustration 1: Key Steps
- *Illustration 1: Illustration Sketchbooks*
- Photography 1: Expressing your vision
- Visual Studies 1: Creative Arts today

### OCA Level 2 units (HE Level 5)
Total credits 120

You need two units at this Level
You need to do both units below:

- Graphic Design 2: Working with a Client
- *Visual Skills 2: Visual Exploration*

### OCA Level 3 units (HE Level 6)
Total credits 120

You need three units at this Level
You will need to do all the units listed below.

**Mandatory Units**

- *Graphic Design 3: Advanced Practice*
- *Graphic Design 3: Visual Research*
- *Graphic Design 3: Sustaining your Practice*

*Additional units will be added during the period 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2020.*
Illustration student, Charlotte Brunskill
BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Programme summary

Graphic Design student, Leanne Putt
Introduction

The BA (Hons) Graphic Design offers an accessible, flexible, and well-supported course of study through which students can develop their creative voice within a specialist understanding of the discipline. It is an academically rigorous course that integrates theory and practice and develops autonomous learning skills within a stimulating learning environment. It supports the development of a sustainable and reflective creative practice for employment, self-employment, further study, or continued personal development.

The course philosophy is informed by OCA's charitable commitment to provide a flexible and open learning experience that supports a broad range of student expectation and needs. The OCA attracts a diverse range of students, who are at various stages of their lives and careers and motivated by professional and/or personal aspirations. The course offers an accessible entry point to art and design education for this range of students through part-time and distance learning. Additional support and resources are in place to ensure students are at an appropriate level of study to succeed.

The curriculum focuses on the visual language of graphic design and application of creative problem solving to deliver visual solutions that communicate effectively. The combination of typography, image and layout are the basic visual building blocks of graphic design and are explored through an investigation of visual language and dynamics, in relationship to wider visual culture and through their application in a range of design contexts. A practical and contextual understanding of typography and type design is introduced at HE Level 4 and extended at Level 5. Editorial design, info-graphics, wayfaring, branding, campaigning and identity design are introduced as specialist practices at Level 5. Students are encouraged to expand their definitions of graphic design through an exploration of contemporary practices and the relation to on-going developments in print, new media and other forms of communication. A process led approach to creative problem solving examines the interpretation of briefs, the generation, selection and testing of ideas, visual research and outcomes. Project work is framed around the client / graphic designer relationship, moving from a tutor to student led approach as the course progresses. This progression encourages students to undertake self-initiated and client-led external projects or develop forms of self or online publishing. Opportunities for collaboration with peers is encouraged through course material and supported via the OCA learning environment. Paper-based graphic design informs the majority of the course, with students introduced to web, screen-based and moving-image applications.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to develop personally meaningful work by interpreting their understanding of graphic design and tailoring project work to their own creative and learning aspirations. They are supported in becoming visually literate designers, and in developing their own creative voice that they can apply to a range of contexts.

The course sits alongside a degree in Illustration and Visual Communication, sharing a range of learning material, resources and tutors. Shared units at HE Levels 4 provide a variety of entry points onto the degree, and allow students the option to identify an area of specialism or choose an interdisciplinary visual communication pathway. Alongside a core unit in graphic design at HE Level 4, students can choose either a specialist Creative Book Design unit...
exploring editorial layout and design and/or a shared Visual Language unit that provides a practical framework to explore and develop students’ creative processes. Depending on this choice, students can also undertake units in book design exploring artists’ books, illustration, photography or creative arts. HE Level 5 is underpinned by a specialist unit in graphic design and graphic design options within the shared Visual Skills 2 unit that supports a process-led approach to generating ideas, and developing visual and technical skills across a choice of media and technologies. A shared structure and units at HE Level 6 provides a framework for students to contextualise their practice, develop a specialist understanding of graphic design, synthesise critical ideas and visual work through a body of written and visual research, and undertake a self-directed major project culminating in an exhibition and/or publication. Integration of theory and practice across these units supports critical reflection in accessible ways and widens the cultural, social, political and commercial contexts that frames students understanding of graphic design and their own work. This critical and contextual reflection is evidenced through research and reflective tasks at HE Level 4, two critical reviews at Level 5 and a body of visual and written research for the Visual Research unit at Level 6.

The course provides stimulating and high quality learning materials, tutor support and resources to help develop a sense of visual and intellectual enquiry. Learning material are authored by a team of educators and/or practitioners, drawing on current academic research and teaching practice in the discipline. At HE Level 6, these have been supplemented by case studies from a range of contemporary practitioners, researchers and recent graduates. The course team is made up of a range of appropriately qualified and experienced tutors who are all either current practitioners within the field of graphic design or allied disciplines and/or lecturing in the subject at other UK art colleges or Universities.

Within the existing OCA learning environment, the course supports students to develop the skills necessary for autonomous learning, encourages a personal creative voice within their work, and provides opportunities to apply their skills creatively within a range of projects. The course focuses on developing the skills necessary for autonomous learners to succeed. These skills provide a platform for students to undertaken their studies, development a range of technical skills, and fosters self-reliant approaches to on-going professional development and lifelong learning. An understanding of industry standard software, including freeware equivalents is supported through course materials, signposting to existing resources and telephone and/or email support from course advisors. The learning environment provides opportunities to join and contribute to a diverse learning community through forum discussions, study visits and other platforms that allows for wider interaction, networking, collaboration and reflection.

Students are supported in developing a personal and/or professional understanding of graphic design that can be extended into employment, self-employment, further study, or continued personal development. The course supports the undertaking of live projects and work-related learning through project work. It encourages students to develop a sustainable approach to their practice by establishing studio spaces, support networks and by setting up individual or collaborative exhibitions and/or publications.
Learning and teaching

Learning and teaching strategy
The course’s learning and teaching strategy is framed by OCA’s purpose to widen access to Creative Arts Education through flexible supported open learning.

By ‘widening access’ we mean:
• this course can be studied from any location and does not require students to travel to attend classes – this is of particular relevance for those with mobility constraints, who live in remote areas or are in custodial institutions;
• the needs of students with disabilities are factored into the design and delivery of the course.

By ‘supported’ we mean:
• this course is supported by personal tutors who advise and guide their students’ learning;
• students have access to their peers through discussion forums that are animated and moderated by the OCA;
• students can request adjustments or additional help to enable them to study successfully with the College.

By ‘Open and Flexible Learning’ we mean:
• this course can be studied successfully at a distance;
• this course has flexible start dates and pace of study is negotiated between the student and the tutor (within defined limits).

This approach translates into a core offer to students, which consists of:
• paper-based and/or digital learning materials for each unit;
• one-to-one written and/or verbal formative feedback and support from a named tutor support materials (such as guides on aspects of study and course handbooks);
• access to dialogue with peers via the OCA student website / Google Hangout critiques;
• learner support for any difficulties with the practicalities of studying via email or telephone;
• digital library resources (including Oxford Art online, Bridgeman Education Art Library and scanned copies of essential and recommended essays and chapters).

In addition to these core aspects of study, students may access:
• study visits to exhibitions, workshops and other events in different parts of the country;
• current creative art and design reviews, articles and discussion via the WeAreOCA blog;
• student led initiatives such as study visits and seminars, supported by the student body, OCASA;
• a range of social media resources that provide additional OCA content or signpost students to existing online material (via Flickr, Pinterest, Vimeo, YouTube).
PDP
Personal and professional development is linked to all levels of the course through the learning log which is integral to each unit and helps students to plan, integrate and take responsibility for their personal, career and academic development. The log is used as a tool for self-reflection to document and reflect on creative progress, reflect on tutor feedback and to identify areas for development. In dialogue with tutors through formative feedback, students are encouraged to identify strengths and learning needs and establish learning goals that might improve perceived weaknesses and enhance strengths. The learning log is considered as part of the assessment process and contributes towards final marks.

Independent learning
The Art and Design Benchmarks say that ‘Active learning through project-based enquiry has always been a feature of the art and design curriculum in higher education. Through this approach students have been encouraged to develop both the capacity for independent learning and the ability to work with others.’ Through the OCA open learning model of project and research-based activities students learn to study independently with tutor support, and learn to work with others by interacting with them, providing and receiving support and exchanging ideas via the OCA forum.

For each unit, students receive paper-based or digital copies of course materials and access to a tutor. Course materials provide a contextual overview of the subject and a range of projects for students to engage with. Each project will contain written and visual content, a number of exercises and research tasks, leading towards a final assignment activity. Typically there are five assignments per unit, which each take between 8 to 12 weeks, depending on the rate of study and how the deadline has been negotiated between students and tutor. At the end of each part of the unit, students submit their exercises, assignment and learning log via post or digitally.

Tutors establish a working relationship with students through initial email, telephone or video contact and welcome packs. Tutors respond to student submissions by providing written and/or verbal formative feedback that reflects on the work they have produced, provides guidance on areas to develop and frames the work within the assessment criteria for the unit. Tutors and Course Advisers are available to deal with any ad hoc support needs the student may encounter.

Tutor feedback reports are typically around 1000 words and provide the main interaction between student and tutor. Students are asked to reflect on this feedback in their learning logs. Tutor reports are copied to the OCA head office and subject to periodic review to ensure standards are being maintained. These reviews are conducted on a rolling programme, with tutors reports regularly reviewed by course leaders and the Director of Teaching and Learning Quality. All new tutors have their reports monitored for the first six months and mentoring is provided. Subsequently reports are looked at during each formal assessment event, in conjunction with student work and feedback is given to tutors, where necessary. If any cause for concern about a tutor’s reports is raised, the tutor is closely monitored and mentored for a period.
**Online learning**

Communications between the OCA, tutors and students is predominantly by email. We are encouraging the use of Skype and Google Hangout for tutorials, as this can enliven the interaction between tutor and student. OCA has a dedicated website for students which includes online resources, discussion forums and portfolios for individual student’s work. Peer communication takes place in the student forums, or via comments on the WeareOCA blog or other student blogs, as well as study visits.

The student forums represent the main method of communication between students and their peers. Concepts are discussed and knowledge developed through debates that are informally moderated by OCA tutors. Critiques of work, both in development and completed, are sought from peers through the forum.

Support materials are available to students via the OCA website and are sent to students at the start of each unit. These provide guidance on all aspects of OCA study, including keeping sketchbooks and learning logs, developing study skills and criticality, an introduction to higher education, course specific reading lists, and course handbooks. Graphic design students are provided with copies of the quarterly Eye typography journal.

Digital library resources include:
- VADS, V&A Museum online resources for visual arts
- Bridgeman Education image library
- Oxford Art Online
- Scanned copies of essays and chapters from essential and recommended reading lists across all units (permitted under CLA Higher Education Licence)
- OCA study guides
- OCA videos
- Links to existing online resources, including Process Arts, TATE etc. online journal, JISC Media Hub and The Metropolitan Museum journal

**Time frames**

The flexibility of the OCA means you can complete your degree to suit you, taking anything from 3 to 12 years. The full degree programme must be completed in 12 years.

**Employability**

Students are encouraged to develop a sustainable model for their practice, whether this relates to their personal or professional development, through the establishment of their own studio space, local support networks (which may include fellow OCA students) and access to resources. Learning materials and project work encourages students to frame their practice within wider professional contexts, present their practice to a professional level and identify potential opportunities for further study or employment. The Sustaining Your Practice Unit supports the development of a portfolio of work, marketing material and an external exhibition that can provide a platform for students to seek employment or establish their practice.
Additional learning and teaching resources

Study visits
Optional study visits to exhibitions, workshops or events are available to all students but access to them are limited based on location or personal circumstances. To mitigate, study visits are summarised in blog posts on the WeAreOCA blog. Recent study visits include:
- British Folk Art, Tate Britain, London 2014
- Pick Me Up graphic arts festival and Association of Illustrators talk, Somerset House, London, 2014
- Liverpool Biennial, Tate Liverpool, Bluecoat, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 2014
- New Designers, London Business Centre, 2014

Unit materials
The written unit materials have been specifically produced for distance learning delivery and are designed for individual self-study. They consist of subject-specific learning content and a series of learning projects each culminating in an assignment, the results of which are discussed with the tutor. The unit materials contain a balance of practical exercises and large scale projects and research tasks/points.

Study Guides
There are guides on keeping sketchbooks, writing learning logs, study skills, and keeping blogs, among others. All of these are available as downloads form the OCA website.

Reading Lists
The BA programme has a comprehensive study list composed of key texts, journals and websites for each unit. At higher levels, when students undertake their own projects, reading lists are negotiated with tutors.

Blogs
Blogs are maintained by students as public versions of the learning log. Their public status allows opinions to be expressed by fellow students, or the general public if desired, on the work being produced. Being accessible to other students, they offer a wide range of interpretations of unit projects to be seen, read and commented upon by others, allowing learning to take place through social activity centered around a programme of study. If maintained as a learning log, the address of the blog is submitted at assessment time, instead of a physical learning log.

Formative and diagnostic feedback
Ongoing guidance and formative feedback on assignments is given by the student’s tutor and offers clear guidance with regard to future development. A copy of each tutor feedback report given to the student is logged with OCA in order that OCA can monitor tutor quality and performance.
Assessment

Assessment methods
Students are assumed to be planning to enter for summative assessment unless they declare otherwise during the unit. Tutors work with the student to advise them on presenting their work for assessment and students can access a number of OCA resources to help support their understanding of the assessment process.

There are no examinations. Assessment is through the examination of personal development planning and continual reflection in learning logs or blogs, practical projects, critical reviews and essays. The student uses OCA guidelines to prepare a body of work complete with sketchbooks, storyboards and learning logs (or blog) to send to OCA for assessment. This submission includes the summative assignments of each section of the unit.

Assessment tasks are linked to the objectives of each unit. As the student progresses through the unit the assessment increasingly encourages autonomous learning and self-evaluation. Tutors provide feedback during the unit, with constructive criticism, and assessment takes place once the student has completed a unit in full.

Summative assessment takes place at one of three annual assessment events at OCA Head Office with a team of tutors associated with the course and course leader overseeing the assessment process. For each unit, students submit a body of physical and/or digital project work, their learning log and a portfolio selection for assessment. First and second markers view the work in relation to level assessment criteria, before discussing the work and, if necessary calling on a third marker to moderate. Summative feedback and grades are provided to students and examples of good practice and student work are disseminated via the WeAreOCA blog. Formative feedback reports are reviewed by assessors to monitor feedback quality and tutor performance.

Did you know?
The University for the Creative Arts validates all of the Open College of the Arts degrees.
Assessment criteria
The Graphic Design degree has overarching assessment criteria, these trace the development of the work as outlined in the units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employ creativity in the process of observation, interpretation, problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>analysis, proposing, visualising and/or making; articulating independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>judgements and a personal creative voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4: 40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5: 35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 6: 30%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and idea development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source, analyse and assimilate research material and develop, test, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>evaluate ideas in order to generate ideas and solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5: 20%</td>
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<td>Level 6: 20%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Visual and Technical Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use visual skills in visualising, making and presenting, and materials,</td>
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<tr>
<td>techniques and technologies to communicate ideas and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5: 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 6: 30%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise awareness of appropriate historical, critical, professional and/</td>
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<tr>
<td>or emerging contexts, debates; be informed by underlying concepts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principles and working practices; and use critical and reflective skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>to support a self-directed and sustained personal and/or professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 6: 20%</td>
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Illustration student, Katherine Jasven
Graphic Design student, Dolores Costello
BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Level four units

Graphic Design student, Emma Kelly
Lina Homer

Graphic Design 1 student

“\textit{I began studying in January 2012. I chose to study with OCA because of the flexible study conditions, a wealth of learning resources and the supportive one-to-one relationship with a tutor. The degree structure appealed to me as it had an excellent balance between theoretical content and practical application. I found that being able to schedule and organise my own workload helped me to feel in control of my whole learning process. As a result I have gained confidence in my creative abilities, research, reflection and technical skills, and advanced my knowledge in visual communications and contemporary art.}”

Find out more

To view more student profiles, visit www.oca.ac.uk/our-students/
Graphic Design 1: Core Concepts | 40 credits

The unit provides a practical and contextual introduction to graphic design. Using the basic visual language, practices and processes of graphic design you will begin to creatively apply your skills to a range of predominantly paper-based projects in order to develop practical competences, explore your creative potential, and to appreciation how to communicate effectively.

It introduces design thinking through creative problem-solving activities, exploring the relationship between form and function; and by developing a design process through techniques in researching, developing, visualising and presenting ideas.

Visual literacy will be developed through basic colour theory, the visual dynamics of composition and layout, and an exploration of how images are constructed and read using collage.

An introduction to typography will be supported through an historical overview, exploring ways of recognising different typefaces and the concepts of legibility and readability. It will provide a practical understanding of the use of typography within layouts, a creative exploration of type as a form of visual text, and provide the opportunity to test this learning through a combination of written and practical tasks.

Visual identity will be explored through the development of branding and publicity material. An appreciation of the historical and contemporary contexts of graphic design and typography will be supported by exploring the work of other graphic designers.

Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• experiment creatively with visual language in the practices and processes of graphic design;
• explore creative problem solving and visual research to develop a range of ideas and visual outcomes;
• introduce you to the design and technical skills for graphic design;
• introduce you to the historical and contemporary contexts and debates in graphic design and reflect on your own practice.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• develop your creative and visual abilities in your practice as a graphic designer;
• use creative problem solving and research to generate visual ideas;
• demonstrate your use of design and technical skills for graphic design;
• articulate an understanding of the contexts of graphic design practices and reflect on your own learning.
Book Design 1: Creative Book Design | 40 credits

The unit provides a broad practical and contextual introduction to book design. It introduces basic creative design processes, skills and techniques by exploring commercial publishing, small-scale publications and altered books.

It provides a practical introduction to basic design principles and layouts using typography and images in magazine spreads and small publications; simple book construction and book binding techniques; and an overview of the use of paper and printing techniques. You will develop your ideas through the production of prototypes, mock-ups to finished book covers, layouts, fanzines and hand-made books.

You will apply your knowledge and understanding of book design by undertaking a range of practical tasks that requires the development of ideas and research, the application of design principles, exploring visual language and narrative within books, and a range of practical design and making skills. Drawing on contemporary and historical examples of book design, you will develop a contextual understanding of publishing and creative book design, and your learning log will be used to critically reflect on these contexts in relation to your own practice.

Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• explore the creative practices and principles of book design;
• develop your skills in visual research to inform creative responses to book design;
• introduce you to the design and technical skills for book design;
• understand the historical and contemporary contexts of printing and book design and reflect on your own practice.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• demonstrate your creative and practical abilities in book design;
• use visual research to creatively inform your practice as a book designer;
• generate creative ideas, research and proposals that demonstrate an awareness of design principles and demonstrate your use of design and technical skills for book design;
• demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of book design and reflect on your own learning.
Visual Skills 1: Visual dynamics | 40 credits

The Visual Skills unit provides a practical framework to explore and develop your creative process. The unit provides a broad introduction to basic design skills and visual dynamics applicable across graphic design, illustration and other disciplines, and encourages you to take an experimental and process-led approach to developing visual ideas.

Visual experimentation and idea development is important in generating a range of outcomes, finding new ways of working and beginning to identify your own personal voice within your work. The unit provides a framework through which you can test out visual variations, generate and develop creative ideas, explore mixed-media outcomes, use a range of media and materials, and undertake process-led approaches to developing your ideas and visual work.

Using the fundamental elements of colour, tone, line, shapes and composition as a starting point you will explore the interplay of these components in creating visual dynamics on the page. You will be introduced to a range of creative processes through which image-making can be explored, developed and tested. The unit will extend your visual ideas through drawing, making, collage and the use of digital and other technologies, and by exploring the creative potential of working across these.

Throughout the unit you will be encouraged to mix-and-match media, techniques and approaches in order to develop your own creative process. Your learning log will be used to reflect on and document your journey, and make connections with ideas and approaches from a wide range of other artists' and designers' work.

Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• experiment with and take a process-led approach to creating visual ideas;
• develop your skills in visual research to inform your visual practice in a range of media and technologies;
• introduce you to design and technical skills and explore visual dynamics using a range of media and technology;
• understand the historical and contemporary practices of visual designers and reflect on your own practice.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• develop a range of visual ideas that are informed by experimentation;
• use visual research skills to develop your visual practice using a range of media;
• demonstrate your visual and technical skills through the creative use of a range of techniques within your work;
• demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of visual design practices and reflect on your own learning.
Book Design 1: Artists’ Books | 40 credits

The unit supports a creative exploration of the artist book as a space to develop self-initiated ideas within the format of one-off or small scale publications.

Drawing on a range of disciplines, the unit encourages you to creatively explore how your ideas can be developed across physical book formats, be developed as a sequence or narrative, and examine the conventions of both book design, printmaking and the presentation of illustration, graphic design or creative arts visual ideas.

The unit introduces a range of simple print-making, book construction and book binding techniques; explores how books can be creatively re-imagined or re-constructed through altered books, paper craft and mixed media approaches; examines the relationship between text and image in terms of content and meaning, and the creative use of typography, photography and/or illustration; and encourages the development of self-initiated ideas that can be developed through the production of prototypes, mock-ups, small-scale publications and finished hand-made books.

You will develop a contextual understanding of how artists, illustrators and designers have creatively used the format of the book by examining historical and contemporary examples of artist books as well as considering the implications of the book as a work of art. Your learning log will provide a space to reflect on the results, make connections to the work of other artists and designers, and to help identify your own personal voice within your work.

Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• explore the artist book as a means to express creative ideas;
• develop your skills in visual research to inform your development of an artist’s book;
• introduce you to a range of technical and practical skills in constructing and designing an artist’s book;
• understand the historical and contemporary contexts of the artist book and reflect on your own practice.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• demonstrate the creative potential of the artist book as a form;
• use visual research skills to develop, test and present your ideas;
• employ technical skills in visualising, designing and constructing an artist book;
• demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of the role of the artist book and reflect on your own learning.
Illustration 1: Key Steps in Illustration | 40 credits

The Illustration 1 unit supports a practical and contextual introduction to illustration through the creative use of drawing and image-making in developing ideas, content and visual outcomes.

The unit will support the development of your creative ideas by examining how to analyse a brief, generate and visualise ideas, use reference material to inform your approach and begin to develop content and meaning within your work. You will develop an understanding of the basic visual language of illustration, explore mark-making and drawing, composition, framing, visual hierarchies and colour theory.

Taking the central use of the figure in illustration as a starting point, this unit will explore the development of tools and materials, subjective and objective drawing and the use of character design in illustration. You will explore the relationship between text and image by undertaking authorial and editorial projects and developing your own visual content.

The unit uses sketchbooks as an important tool for developing your creative thinking, visual research and ideas development. An appreciation of the historical and contemporary contexts of illustration will be developed by reviewing the work of other illustrators. You will be encouraged to critique your work, appreciate an understanding of audiences, and use your learning log as a space to reflect on the results, make connections to wider contexts and to help begin to identify your own personal voice within your work.

**Aims**
The aims of this unit are to:
- explore creatively the relationship between text and image in response to illustration briefs;
- use visual research to explore and develop a range of ideas for illustration;
- introduce you to a range of approaches to drawing, mark-making and image-making for illustration;
- understand the historical and contemporary contexts of illustration and reflect on your own practice.

**Learning outcomes**
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
- develop methods to creatively respond to briefs as an illustrator;
- demonstrate your use of visual research to explore and generate ideas;
- use a range of drawing, mark making and image-making skills to develop your illustration practice;
- demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of illustration and reflect on your own learning.
Illustration 1: Illustration sketchbooks | 40 credits

The Illustration Sketchbooks unit provides a practical exploration of drawing through the development of a range of creative approaches. Recognising the central role of drawing within illustration, the unit encourages you to develop a sense of your own personal voice through experimentation with drawing, mark making and materials. A series of sustained drawing-based projects aims to support the development of your sketchbook as an on-going process and resource that can feed into your development as a creative practitioner.

The unit will introduce a range of approaches to drawing and documenting from life by undertaking observational, narrative and reportage drawing projects based on the idea of the ‘everyday’. Supporting these projects will be an examination of drawing as a way of capturing the seen world through reportage and figure drawing.

Using a series of motifs as a starting point, you will creatively explore the potential of a range of materials, processes and mark-making tools within your sketchbook. These motifs will provide a structure to examine the basic visual building blocks of image-making, through colour, tone, line and shape as well as encouraging experimentation with mixed-media.

The potential of your sketchbook to act as seedbed for new ideas will be explored through projects that encourage a process-led approach. These projects will explore drawing through repetition and variation, narrative structures, and other prompts that will encourage visual experimentation and the development of new approaches to image-making. Your learning log will provide a space to reflect on the results, make connections to the work of other artists and designers, and to help identify your own personal voice.

**Aims**
The aims of this unit are to:
- explore creative approaches to drawing, mark-making and visual language as an illustrator;
- use observational drawing as visual research and idea development;
- experiment with a range of materials, processes and mark-making tools in developing your ideas;
- understand the historical and contemporary context of illustration and reflect on your own practice.

**Learning outcomes**
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
- develop methods to creatively explore and respond to briefs as an illustrator;
- demonstrate your use of visual research in the generation of ideas for illustration;
- use a range of visual approaches to develop and communicate our ideas;
- demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of illustration and reflect on your own learning.
Photography 1: Expressing your Vision | 40 credits

Creative photography and technique go hand in hand. As a photographer it is imperative to understand the importance of technical decisions in relation to the range of meanings the image communicates. This unit will explore what impact technical decisions have on the final outcome of your photographs, both in terms of how they look, and what they communicate.

You will focus on how to employ appropriate techniques in your personal photography. The emphasis will be on using photography as an investigative tool to initiate personal responses to briefs. Every historical break from the tradition resulted in a development of the medium leading us to where we are today. The unit will challenge traditional ideas of ‘correct technique’ and looks at how historic and contemporary practitioners break these rules to the benefit of their personal expression.

This unit begins to consider the power of the image and its ability to transcend fixed meanings. You will be challenged to experiment with various techniques and reflect upon the impact they have on the final meanings of the image.

Indicative syllabus content

- Exposure and camera controls.
- Working with light and its creative possibilities.
- Exploring surface and depth.
- Lenses and their effects.
- Tracing time.
- Photography as self-expression.

Aims

The aims of this unit are to:

- introduce you to technical and visual skills for photography;
- select, edit and present your work as a photographer;
- use visual research and experimentation to respond to a photographic brief;
- understand the historical and contemporary context of photography and photographic practices and reflect on your own practice.

Learning outcomes

On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of photographic techniques and image making;
- present a selected body of photographic work;
- develop and communicate your ideas as a photographer;
- demonstrate a critical and contextual understanding of photography and reflect on your own learning.
Visual Studies 1: Creative Arts Today | 40 credits

This unit is a broad-based introduction to a range of contemporary creative arts for students new to the creative arts. It explores some ways in which two key themes (place/space and time/journey) are explored in the fields of art (painting and drawing), creative writing, textiles, visual communications (illustration, graphic design) and photography and looks at how different creative disciplines interact. It introduces basic research tools and techniques in the creative arts; students will therefore need access to the internet. Students are made aware of the theoretical underpinning to the creative arts in preparation for more detailed study at Level 2. Exercises and assignments will require students to research, evaluate and write about artworks in a range of disciplines; practical exercises are optional.

Indicative syllabus content
• An awareness and basic knowledge of a broad range of creative arts, including contemporary art, creative writing, textiles, visual communications and photography.
• Experience in exploring two key themes through the creative arts and some interrelationships between creative disciplines studied.
• An awareness of a theoretical underpinning to the creative arts.
• Experience in using key research tools to explore and investigate the creative arts and application of critical thinking to research material.

Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• explore a broad range of contemporary practice in the creative arts;
• examine a range of creative disciplines through the investigation of contemporary creative practitioners;
• introduce you to research skills and key theories in the creative arts;
• use critical thinking and reflective writing skills to develop your learning.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• demonstrate an awareness of the broad range of contemporary practice in the creative arts;
• discuss the scope and interrelationships across a range of creative disciplines;
• apply your research skills to explore the theoretical underpinning of the creative arts;
• reflect upon your own learning experience.
BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Level five units

Graphic Design student, Anthony Carey
Christian Lloyd
Programme Leader

“I am an educator, artist, and designer with an interest in do-it-yourself, community-based, and collaborative approaches to making art, design, and popular culture.

After graduating with a degree in Graphic Design and Illustration from Chelsea School of Art, I worked on print based graphic design and web projects for community, arts, and education sectors. Often collaborating with other people, my work aimed to inform, educate, or entertain in some way.

As an educator, I initially worked for a variety of adult education organisations, before writing and running a degree in Visual Communication at Leeds College of Art (2003-12). I have been an External Examiner at Havering College London (2008-10), and currently lecture in contemporary art and illustration at Huddersfield University. I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

I maintain a diverse arts practice that has included performance, moving image, painting, and printmaking. I am currently involved with a collaborative project called Bristow & Lloyd (www.bristowlloyd.info), which playfully explores the ways in which we tell stories about our everyday lives. The work encourages participation and involves working with written or spoken word through typography, small publications, or sound. Our Home Rules exhibition explored different ways people govern their domestic spaces through a collection of hand rendered signs. In 2001 I undertook a Masters in Contemporary Fine Art Practice which focused on my “less avant garde more ‘ava go” performance work…”

Find out more
To view the rest of Christian’s tutor profile and look at some more, visit www.oca.ac.uk/our-tutors/
Graphic Design 2: Working with a Client | 60 credits

This unit enables you to build on the skills introduced in Graphic Design 1 to develop your contextual and creative understanding of graphic design, begin to locate your practice in a professional context by undertaking client led projects, and start to define your own creative voice and visual language within your work.

Taking the relationship between a client, brief and graphic designer as a starting point this unit supports your ability to apply creative problem solving techniques, understand the needs of clients and audiences, find effective ways to communicate your creative ideas and develop the critical and reflective skills to evaluate the results.

This unit will explore the creative, practical and critical tools needed to undertake client-led projects and introduce you to how to prepare your artwork for printing. It will creatively explore the integration of typography and visual elements within layouts; introduce graphic design for web and other screen-based contexts; examine the role of graphic design within identity design, branding and campaigning; and look at info-graphics through information and signage design. Running parallel to this, you will develop a contextual understanding of graphic design by reviewing contemporary and historical examples; critical and reflective skills by examining your own visual language and assessing the effectiveness of your visual communications.

Your learning log will be used to document and reflect on this process and help define your emerging sense of a personal voice as a graphic designer, and your critical review will help you to locate your practice within wider contexts.

This is a core unit which all Graphic Design students are required to undertake.

**Aims**
The aims of this unit are to:
- use experimentation to inform your practice and develop personal expression;
- use visual and contextual research skills to inform your practice;
- develop further your graphic design skills for print and screen media;
- understand the contexts of graphic design practices and reflect on your own practice.

**Learning outcomes**
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
- evidence your engagement with experimentation through your practice;
- demonstrate how research has informed your practice;
- develop a body of work that is rigorous in its engagement with conceptual and practical skills;
- situate, reflect and critique on graphic design practices and reflect on your own learning.
Visual Skills 2: Visual exploration | 60 credits

The Visual Skills 2 unit supports an increasingly self-directed approach to exploring and articulating your personal creative voice by extending a process-led approach to how you generate your ideas, develop visual and technical skills across a choice of media and technologies, and by establishing new ways of working by undertaking self-initiated projects and reflecting on the creative processes of other practitioners.

Visual experimentation and idea development is important in generating creative outcomes, establishing innovative ways of working and developing your own creative voice. The unit provides an opportunity to deepen your understanding of your creative practice by extending a process-led approach to visual research through which you will generate, test and develop your visual ideas. You will be encouraged to develop these ideas through a choice of media, explore links between them and establishing your own project to help articulate your personal creative voice. Sketchbooks and/or worksheets are an important element in developing your creative approach from which ideas will emerge and will be extended into finished artwork to a high visual standard. The unit aims to support the integration of digital software, hardware and other technologies within your practice by examining how digitalising and other forms of documentation can help improve the visual quality of your work.

Building on your unit choices at HE Level 4, course material will offer a range of assignment options covering illustration, graphic design and/or visual communication related subjects to help develop technical and visual skills relevant to your practice. These subjects will focus on the creative use of photography, moving image and animation, image and mark making through painting, drawing and printmaking, typography and letterforms, and 3-dimensional work through assemblages and modelling to extend your creative practice off the page.

Your learning log will be used to document and reflect on your experiences, identifying ways in which your creative process can be established and extended in order to provide a sustained personal and/or professional position. You will be encouraged to identify and critically reflect on the work of other graphic designers, illustrators and artists in your learning log, and through a critical review research and discuss the use of visual language, creative processes or use of hybrid technologies in relationship to wider contemporary, professional and/or historical creative practices.
**Aims**
The aims of this unit are to:
- use experimentation to inform your visual practice and develop personal expression;
- use a range of visual and contextual research skills to inform your practice;
- develop further your visual and technical skills across a range of media and technologies;
- explore and understand the historical and contemporary contexts for your visual practice and reflect on your own practice.

**Learning outcomes**
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
- evidence your engagement with experimentation through your practice;
- demonstrate how research has informed your practice;
- develop a body of work that is rigorous in its engagement with conceptual and practical skills;
- situate, reflect and critique on visual practices and reflect on your own learning.
Level six units
Katherine Jasven
Visual Communications 1 student

“At the end of 2012 I began studying illustration with the OCA. Having no art training, it had seemed out-of-reach to study at a tertiary level, until I discovered the OCA. The OCA also meant that I would not be left with large debt and could continue working full time as an Occupational Therapist, so I could chase my dream while not forgetting my responsibilities. The coursework has been wonderfully challenging; the practice of keeping sketchbooks has been invaluable and the feedback from my tutor have enabled me to finally begin to understand my own creative voice.

I would recommend the OCA to anyone eager to springboard into the world of creativity.”
Graphic Design 3: Advanced practice | 40 credits

Building on the learning undertaken at previous levels, this unit provides an opportunity to develop specialist knowledge and understanding of contemporary graphic design. You are encouraged to explore an increasingly personal voice within your practice and improve the quality and presentation of your work.

The unit will develop the design skills necessary to undertake work at this level through the application of your interpretive and creative problem solving skills, research methods, and idea development. You will be encouraged to research into contemporary contexts, identify gaps in your knowledge and understanding and develop self-directed projects that extend your skill set and help develop a sense of specialism or personal voice within your practice.

Audience focused projects will provide an opportunity to produce artwork that is of a high visual standard, can communicate effectively and be ready for commercial printing or other appropriate outcomes.

The unit supports your growing autonomy as a learner and deepening understanding of your practice by establishing self-directed projects, critically evaluating your work, researching and reflecting on contemporary contexts, and thinking about how your practice can best be presented. Your learning log will be used to document these reflections.
Indicative syllabus content

- **Understanding your practice**: An investigation into contemporary and professional practices within the fields of graphic design. Using this research as a starting point, you will undertake a critical reflection of your own practice in order to identify areas of interest, specialism, gaps in your knowledge and understanding or areas for development, and undertake self-directed projects in response.
- **Text and image**: Creatively explore the use of text and image to communicate ideas through a combination of image-making, layout and typography. An overview of commercial print and web processes will provide the context to develop artwork in appropriate formats and to a high visual standard.
- **Audiences**: A critical examination of how to approach designing for an audience through creative problem solving, conducting research, developing and testing ideas, undertaking audience focused project work and reflecting on the results.
- **Presenting your practice**: Explores a range of ways your practice can be presented through the use of portfolios, exhibitions or other promotional material; a reflection on the ways your practice can be conceived and described; and ways through which your personal creative voice can be extended through self-directed project work.

Aims

The aims of this unit are to:

- use experimentation to extend your practice and to develop your visual language;
- extend your visual and research skills to identify a line of enquiry and produce a critically informed body of work;
- further develop your technical and practical skills to realise an ambitious body of work;
- develop a critical and analytical understanding of approaches to graphic design and contemporary cultural contexts.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the unit you will be able to:

- demonstrate how experimentation has informed your practice and visual language;
- produce an ambitious body of work that is critically informed;
- demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of technical and practical skills through your work;
- articulate your critical and conceptual knowledge and understanding of approaches to graphic design and contemporary cultural contexts.
Graphic Design 3: Visual Research | 40 credits

This unit builds on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in previous levels of the course and represents an opportunity to synthesise theory and practice through a self-initiated extended written project and a substantial visual research project.

For graphic design, understanding visual language and having your own voice within it is important in being able to communicate effectively, respond to challenges creatively, and helps to define your practice. In consultation with your tutor you will devise a project that focuses on areas of interest from both a practical and critical perspective.

You will produce an extended written project of 3,500 words alongside a substantial body of supporting, exploratory and investigative visual work. The extended written project may take the form of a traditional essay researching a specific and relevant topic, investigate an aspect of the design process and generate primary-sourced data exploring this, investigate a more specific career orientated area or focus on your working methods and influences in the context of contemporary graphic design practice.

The unit will develop your research skills by exploring research methodologies, primary and secondary research, undertaking written and visual research; exploring approaches to documenting research and integrating visual research and outcomes; support your understanding of critical frameworks by identifying a range of appropriate theoretical and critical frameworks; outlining and signposting major ideas, theories and debates around graphic design practices; and help to develop your ability to document and present your ideas through academic writing skills; identifying sources and analysing appropriate source material; developing analytical and evaluative skills, presenting the extended written project and the visual research and outcomes.

This unit encourages a high degree of self-motivation and autonomy. The assignments will provide a structure to support students’ proposals, research process, writing and presentation, and the learning log will be used to support the development of visual self-reflection, academic enquiry, and evaluation.
Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
• develop a substantial body of visual work and a written project that supports and contextualises your practice;
• undertake focused and sustained research to support the development of a substantial body of written and visual practice;
• further develop your technical and practical skills to realise an ambitious body of work;
• develop a comprehensive knowledge and critical and contextual understanding of your subject area.

Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
• demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of your subject area and contextualise your practice;
• demonstrate the application of appropriate research methods in the development of your written and visual practice;
• demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of technical and practical skills through your work;
• synthesise, articulate and evaluate critical, contextual and conceptual knowledge and understanding of your subject area.
Graphic Design 3: Sustaining your practice | 40 credits

This unit represents the culmination of the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired throughout your study on the course and provides an opportunity to undertake a self-directed major project, present your work to a professional standard, and identify appropriate progression routes into employment, self-employment, professional practice or continued education.

This is a self-directed unit, structured to support the process of undertaking a substantial self-initiated or self-selected project, preparing work for presentation and developing a contextual awareness of your practice. The major project can take the form of self-directed, competition and/or client led briefs.

You will be encouraged to explore the contextual location of your practice through researching, and/or undertaking work-related learning in your practice areas; identify potential progression routes and develop the necessary strategy, self-promotion and presentation skills to help realise your aims. You will be encouraged to develop a portfolio of work to present to a wider audience, through portfolios, online exhibitions or other appropriate means.

This unit encourages a high degree of self-motivation and autonomy. The learning log and assignments will be used to support the development of self-reflection, critique, time-management and professionalism.

### Aims
The aims of this unit are to:
- develop a substantial body of work to a professional standard;
- extend your visual and research skills to identify a line of enquiry and produce a critically informed body of work;
- demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and application of technical and visual skills;
- develop further your knowledge of historic and contemporary approaches to making and presenting graphic design practices.

### Learning outcomes
On satisfactory completion of the unit you will be able to:
- select, produce and present a substantial body of work to a professional standard;
- produce an ambitious body of work that is critically acclaimed;
- produce an ambitious and focused body of work that demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of technical and visual skills;
- demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of historic and contemporary approaches to making and presenting graphic design practices.