UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:

BA (HONS) GRAPHIC DESIGN

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23]
This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each unit can be found in the Unit Descriptors.

Section A – Material Course Information

Validating Body	University for the Creative Arts[1]		
Teaching Body	OCA – Open College of the Arts		
Final Award Title and Type	BA (Hons)		
Course Title	Graphic Design		
Course Location and Length	Campus: OCA/Open and Flexible Learning		Length: Maximum time allowed to complete the programme is 12 years
Mode of Study	Full-time		Part-time	✓
Period of Validation	2021/23 – 2026/27		
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not Applicable		
Type of Accreditation	Not Applicable		
Accreditation due for renewal	Not Applicable		

Entry criteria and requirements[2]

Stage 1 courses are open access so no prior qualifications are required. In order to progress to Stage 2, students must have gained 120 credits at Stage 1, through study or by Accreditation of Prior Learning.

In addition to prior qualifications and learning accreditation, OCA specifies three general requirements for students to be admitted to its degree programmes:
- English language competency;
- access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access*;
- the ability to easily manage a range of basic functions through ICT (information and communications technology)

Full details on each of these requirements can be found in the OCA Student Regulations in the section Admission Requirements.

Students must also be aware of network etiquette and security considerations when using email and the internet. There is a section in OCA's Student Regulations about online etiquette. In addition there is a Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy appended to the Student Regulations. OCA takes these issues seriously. Data protection rules form part of OCA's Conditions of Enrolment. In addition to the information located in our student documentation OCA is developing short videos to explain netiquette and online security.

An unaccredited OCA Foundation Certificate is available for students who need to develop their technical and visual awareness skills before embarking on degree study.

*This requirement may waived, on rare occasions, by the Head of Learner Support if negotiated prior to the start of the course. Typically, exemptions are only given to students with specific disabilities or to those studying in prison.

Specific requirements

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[1] Regulated by the Office for Students

[2] This should be the standard University Criteria unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and include UCAS entry profile for undergraduate courses.

In addition to meeting the admission requirements for all courses, students should ensure they understand the nature of the challenges and requirements of the course they are enrolling on, as outlined on the OCA website.

Disabled students

Applications from students with disabilities are considered using the same criteria and principles as all other applicants. All students with a disability are encouraged to indicate this on their application form in order that advice can be offered on the facilities and services available. Prospective students with a disability will be encouraged to discuss their requirements with the Head of Learner Support.

Maximum period of registration

The maximum period of registration for the course is 12 years.

UCAS entry profile:

n/a

Overall methods of assessment[3]	Written exams:	Practical exams:	Coursework:
Stage 1	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Stage 2	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Stage 3	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Overall Learning & Teaching hours[4]	Scheduled:	Independent:	Placement:
Stage 1	17.5%	82.5%	0.0%
	210 hours	990 hours	0 hours
Stage 2	15.0%	85.0%	0.0%
	180 hours	1020 hours	0 hours
Stage 3	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%
	150 hours	1050 hours	0 hours
General level of staff delivering the course[5]	OCA requires Tutors and Programme Leaders (PLs) to have knowledge of their subject area, proven communication skills, experience of delivering learning and teaching, and a first degree or postgraduate or equivalent, and/or substantial professional experience to support their roles. Tutors and PLs are encouraged to obtain professional recognition by the Higher Education Academy at an appropriate level. All Tutors engage with an induction process, an annual 'Tutor Team Meeting' and 1-2-1s, and are provided with guidance on Formative Feedback, Group Work, and Summative Assessment		
Language of Study	English		
Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement: QAA Art & Design 2019			
Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)			

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[3] As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

[4] As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

[5] Include general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example Professor, Programme Director, Senior Lecturer

The course structure

The structure of all OCA undergraduate awards awarded by the University complies with the Academic Regulatory Framework. The Academic Regulatory Framework includes information about the:
- Rules for progression between the stages of a course;
- Consequences of failure for reassessment and exit awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards;

Unit codes and titles	Level	Credit value	Elective/ Core	Most popular student choice of optional elective units or elective options in core units?	Order of units
Stage 1					
GC41EOD Graphic Design 1.1 The Elements of Design OGRD4153	4	40	Core	N/A	1
GC42RFP Graphic Design 1.2 Research for Practice OGRD4154	4	40	Core	N/A	2
GC43CPT Graphic Design 1.3 Consolidation Project OGRD4155	4	40	Core	N/A	3
Stage 2					
GC51PPE Graphic Design 2.1 Professional Practice OGRD5142	5	40	Core	N/A	4
GC52DFS Graphic Design 2.2 Design Futures OGRD5143	5	40	Core	N/A	5
GC53SDP Graphic Design 2.3 Self-Directed Project OGRD5144	5	40	Core	N/A	6
Stage 3					
GC61PAR Graphic Design 3.1 Practice and Research OGRD6153	6	40	Core	N/A	7
GC62EPS Graphic Design 3.2 External Projects OGRD6154	6	40	Core	N/A	8
GC63MPT Graphic Design 3.3: Major Project OGRD6155	6	40	Core	N/A	9

Course Philosophy

Graphic Design is a practice-based course that encompasses a wide variety of design, typographical and image-making frameworks for students to examine and experiment with as part of their creative journey. The course offers students a variety of relevant visual contexts and through regular tutor support builds these into the learning structure, with a view towards both specialist understanding of graphic design and a broader engagement with the visual arts. The course engages students with ideas in the wider world and applies this to a creative practice with illustration at its core.

Students begin the course by gaining a historical and material understanding of the discipline, and develop this through an expanded examination of contemporary methods and techniques of graphic design in an increasingly globalised cultural context. The three stages of study provide a framework for pacing the content, affording students regular points of contact with their tutor to guide their learning and assist in their personal creative interests.

The graphic design degree is designed for students who wish to fulfil their ambitions for a diverse practical and critical engagement with visual making and design thinking and understand how their unique creative voice situates itself within both contemporary graphic design practice and the wider cultural world.

Course Structure

The BA (Hons) Graphic Design course offers an accessible, flexible, and well-supported course of study through which you can develop your creative voice within a specialist understanding of the discipline.

The course is designed to give you the widest possible span of creative investigation while retaining a strong core structure to underpin your skills and exploration of graphic design. As you progress through the stages, you will develop and refine your study choices as the span of coursework content broadens and deepens.

Stage 1:

Stage 1 supports your creative ideas by examining how to generate and visualise ideas, use research to reflect upon your own design work and inform creative approaches. At the end of the first stage, you will have begun to apply these skills to identify your own personal voice and to develop the content and meaning of your work.

- Unit 1: **Elements of Design** will provide you with a solid grounding in the basic skills of visual research and idea development, through a number of iterative projects. Throughout, the basic elements of design will be investigated and practiced, such as:
  - shape and line
  - colour and texture
  - space and contrast and
  - volume, light and perspective.

- Advancing into Unit 2: **Research for Practice**, you will begin to identify the relationship between key contexts and research methods in devising design solutions. Projects may include:
  - branding and packaging briefs
  - posters and publication designs
  - the visual language of typefaces and letterforms
  - research into key historical movements in design, through designing analogue or digital case studies

- The final unit of stage 1, **Consolidation Project**, will require you to consolidate the skills and knowledge acquired from the previous two units. A selection of appropriate briefs will be provided, where you can begin to explore your personal creative interests by choosing briefs which enable you to either further develop existing strengths, or to revisit areas of the design process which you feel need further investigation. This approach supports your own choice and the development of a

personal design profile. Projects will begin with content which can be used to create design outcomes in distinctive ways; for example, as:
- websites
- editorial design
- information design
- advertising and publicity

At the conclusion of these three units, you will be able to demonstrate competencies in a broad range of visual skills, locate your practice within the context of current design processes, and show a willingness to be experimental, free-thinking and to challenge conventions. You will have gained a broad understanding of the role of design, and designers, in contemporary society, and the relationship between clients, the brief and the designer. A wide range of design practices will have been researched, giving you insights into their possible future directions, and the steps you can take in following units to become both the kind of designer you want to be, and which society needs.

Stage 2:

Stage 2 supports you to consider and resolve more complex and varied design problems. More in-depth research will be required into markets, consumers and the end-user experience. You will be asked to consider current issues and contexts such as globalisation, the environment, cultural diversity and other emerging societal changes, and explore a selection of research methods and focused design processes, to create clearly defined visual communications within a variety of specialist disciplines.

● Unit 1: **Professional Practice**, supports your understanding of Visual Identity (VI) to begin to understand the many component parts behind the companies, brands and logos that you see on the high street, in magazines and websites. Through research, case studies and practical projects, you will begin to apply previous learning to solving complex design and visual communication problems. You will be offered a choice of briefs to support your personal specialist interests. Project outcomes will comprise a range of interrelated media, could including:
  - a company report
  - an on-line newsletter
  - a branding exercise and
  - a VI style-book.
  This resultant brand will be applied to various locations and touch points, such as packaging, shop frontage and corporate literature.

● Advancing into Unit 2: **Design Futures**, you will consider how the World Wide Web and the Internet have dramatically changed the ways in which we access, share and use information, and explore various ways in which design has been used to inform, educate and foster change. You will choose from a range of briefs to produce a comprehensive information campaign, using a variety of printed and digital media. Briefs may include:
  - the promotion of a new product range
  - a campaign for social change, or
  - an awareness raising campaign on behalf of an NGO.
  To deepen your investigation, you can choose from a further set of briefs which require the design of illustrated instructions, such as 'How to Build an Environmentally Friendly House', or 'Silk Screen Printing for Beginners'.

● The final unit of stage 2, **Self-Directed Project** considers how digital technologies have opened up many new opportunities to graphic designers. It is important for new designers to understand the advantages that moving images can provide, and so this unit will provide opportunities to investigate and apply the design of sequenced type and image. You will choose from a range of short projects which will require content to be ordered into sequences through storyboards using type and image. After a number of experimental exercises, students will go on to research and use appropriate software techniques such as stop frame animation, video and other simple forms of moving image. The unit will culminate in the production of a piece of work which explores the advantages of text and images used in sequence, to tell a story, convey information or to invite interaction with a game or similar immersive activity.

Stage 3:

Stage 3 supports you to build on your stage 2 studies and synthesize your creative practice and research interests across self-directed bodies of work and critical thinking assignments. The units provide a framework that enable you to foster an increasingly autonomous and professional approach to your studies.

- Unit 1: *Practice and Research* will introduce you to this level of study by supporting you to initiate and articulate your emerging creative practice, develop relevant skills and research methods, and refine your fluency in critical thinking. The unit requires the production of a body of work comprising a series of projects or larger piece of work outlining what you are interested in making together with a supporting critical thinking element in the form of an essay or presentation.
- Advancing into Unit 2: *External Projects* requires a self-directed project together with a supporting critical thinking element in the form of a case study, business plan, evaluation, etc.
- The final unit of stage 1, *Major Project* requires the completion of a body of work together with a supporting critical thinking element reflecting on and evaluating your body of work in the form of a written essay or visual presentation.

Section C - Course Aims

1. To widen access to education in the study and application of graphic design at undergraduate level through open and flexible learning
2. To ensure students gain the technical skills in graphic design to form a solid foundation for further development
3. To develop students' creative and visual vocabulary through the exploration of a range of material and conceptual approaches grounded in an investigation into expanded contemporary design practices
4. To open up a range of opportunities expanding across disciplines for students to develop their own personal graphic design practice through individually driven research and experimentation
5. To develop students' critical understanding of the diverse and shifting social, historical, cultural and environmental contexts globally in which expanded design practices emerge from and with which they are in constant dialogue
6. To provide a learning environment through practice, research and rigorous experimentation in which the student has the intellectual and artistic potential to challenge and change their view of the world and its structures
7. To foster high level ethical and professional standards
8. To develop autonomous learners with the intellectual, practical and conceptual skills to push the boundaries of contemporary graphic design practice and to transfer their diverse learning into future employment, further research, collaborative practices or life-long learning

Section D - Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

Knowledge

LO1   Demonstrate proficiency in a comprehensive range of graphic design practices and techniques

LO2   Manage the learning process resourcefully and independently and make appropriate use of primary sources and academic texts

LO3   Demonstrate by means of written work and oral presentations a critical understanding of the principles of graphic design practice and knowledge of emerging aspects of the discipline and those at the forefront of debate

LO4   Evaluate your own work and that of others critically and objectively

Understanding

LO5   Develop an understanding of the visual language of graphic design and your voice within it, informed through research and critical thinking.

LO6   Build skills in understanding your creative practice through taking a critical approach to your work

LO7   Understand the relationship your creative practice has to a wider contemporary visual culture.

LO8   Demonstrate a breadth of inventiveness, ideas generation and techniques in the production of creative work.

Application

LO9   Communicate your work to a high professional and aesthetic standard

LO10 Use practical, technical, and communication skills in applying graphic design visual language to a range of tasks

LO11 Engage in appropriate professional practices such as working with clients, networking, self-presentation, communication and negotiation skills

Section E - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Open College of the Arts (OCA) strategic vision is "to be at the forefront of student-led creative arts education through open, enhanced, & supported distance learning, for an evolving society". OCA is a non-profit educational charity, whose purpose is to widen participation in arts education through open flexible distance and online learning.

OCA uses a learning design process to consider the content, activities, and support needed to deliver course aims This flexible approach recognises and supports a diverse range of student experiences, ambitions, and needs. In line with OCA's core values, it also considers how to encourage more open, empowering, engaging, social, sustainable and evolving approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment.

As distance learners, students will need to work independently and to develop appropriate research and study skills. An induction programme and 'Getting Started' introductions are in place to support students to do this, and to help establish relationships with peers and tutors. Ongoing study skills support is available through #weareoca, OCA's blog content, and other cross-curriculum study skills resources.

OCA's virtual learning environment, OCA Learn, provides a platform for content, activities, and support for each unit. A dedicated Degree Space is in place to foster course wide dialogue and peer support through forum activities and shared resources. OCA has a responsibility to ensure all learning environments, content, and communication are as accessible as possible for individuals who have sensory, cognitive, neurological, physical, or other disabilities, and to provide an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges the diversity of our students' experiences. OCA's Student Engagement Strategy places a key focus on accessibility, with provision for designing learning materials with enhanced operability for mobile devices, which conform to all appropriate accessibility standards.

Course content is delivered through a range of learning materials, including written, video, and interactive media. These materials provide introductions and framing of subject related content, technical guidance, case studies, and other appropriate information. Materials are primarily accessed through OCA Learn, as well as #weareoca, which provides opportunities for current tutor and student-led content and debate.

Accompanying activities, such as exercises, research tasks, and assignments, encourage students to work independently and flexibly by selecting, testing, and interpreting relevant research, and applying understanding of critical thinking and creativity. Through these activities, students will begin to identify, develop and manage their own projects and document their progress through a learning log, or similar format. Learning logs are provided through OCA Spaces.

Students are expected to have a basic grasp of any software required for their course and to learn more complex usage as necessary as they progress. OCA provides students with G Drive online storage which includes word processing, presentation, drawing, and mind mapping tools. While OCA does not provide a help desk service to students for software, learning activities provide structured context for software learning at staged points throughout the course, and forums provide opportunities for peer support.

Learning is supported by tutors who provide timely, well-grounded and constructive formative feedback that aims to stretch and challenge learners at staged points within the unit. In parallel, tutor and student-led learning takes place through online group work. Group work offers opportunities to discuss and shape ideas, and share and support approaches to learning within video, webinar, study events, and/or forum activities and support. Critically reflecting on work through self-evaluation provides a valuable way for students to observe and learn from peers, to develop increasingly professional personal and graduate skills, and to develop a deepening recognition of subject boundaries. Students are encouraged to do this through their learning log, reflective assessment presentations, and by reflecting on formative feedback.

Student Services provide study planning and pastoral support for any student who requests it. This is available personally via telephone, online, or within student forums, or more generally through additional resources, signposted through OCA Learn and/or #weareoca.

Students will engage with a range of academic literature throughout the course, supported through library access and seminars. Essential and recommended reading lists have been selected for their academic currency, and from authors and practitioners across a range of viewpoints, ethnicities, identities, and cultures. All reading lists can be accessed through the digital library services and eBooks. Additional online texts and journals are also available via UCA's online library. Students are supported through OCA's Link Librarian via OCA Learn and #weareoca content and debate.

As students' progress, their research will become more self-directed. Independent research and projects will be undertaken alongside a consideration of any ethical issues. Guidance, resources, and support for any external and/or collaborative projects are available through the Enterprise Hub and in discussion with tutors.

In addition to OCA's core support, OCA's Student Association (OCASA) provides opportunities for students to physically engage with cross-curriculum Study Events, asynchronous Virtual Study Events, or to become involved in wider student discussions or other events.

Assessment Strategy

OCA's assessment strategy is based on an assessment for learning model which emphasises assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning. Therefore, assessment is seen as an integrated and meaningful part of the learning journey. Assessment outcomes encourage learners to critically reflect on their progress and to articulate ideas and outcomes effectively through appropriate presentation formats.

Assessment criteria focus on the extent to which knowledge of relevant concepts, practices, theories, and contexts are demonstrated, the level of understanding demonstrated through the testing and application of knowledge, and the degree to which knowledge and understanding are demonstrated through the application of technical, communication, personal, transferable, and graduate skills. To help articulate these, assessment criteria are presented at each level through a set of range statements.

Summative assessment can take place online or at a physical assessment event. Students will submit work in line with course assessment guidelines, and will be assessed through group marking overseen by the Programme Leader. Quality assurance is provided through moderation of marks, internal verification of the assessment process, parity checks to ensure grades are consistent across OCA, plagiarism checks, and

scrutiny by External Examiners. Students will be provided with summative marks and feedback at the end of each unit.

Costs of additional materials/resources

Software and digital equipment
As part of some units, students are required to use specialist applications. Students are responsible for sourcing and, where necessary, purchasing any additional software specified. Where possible, open or freeware equivalents will be discussed alongside industry standard options. Students are eligible for any student discounts on computer equipment and software.

Materials and resources
Students are responsible for sourcing and purchasing the materials, resources, and any additional equipment used in the production of their work. These costs will differ from student to student, depending on each student's area of focus.

Transportation of work
Students are responsible for any postage costs of work to/from tutors or OCA for formative feedback and/or assessment. OCA will charge students for any excess postage payable on work submitted for formal assessment which exceeds the maximum permitted weight. Alternatively, students can submit work digitally for free.

Learner Support Scheme
In line with OCA's Access and Participation Plan, the College continues to invest in schemes to improve engagement into creative arts from those from low socio-economic backgrounds through a bursary fund.

For further details on your specific course costs, please visit www.oca.ac.uk

Section F - Employability

OCA recognises that its current student body holds a broad range of employment and enterprise aspirations. Many students have established careers, see their studies as a change in direction, and for an increasing number of younger students, as a first step into a creative career. As distance learners, OCA students are located across the UK and internationally and consequently have differing levels of resources and opportunity. In order to provide meaningful and consistent educational experiences and outcomes for all of these students, OCA encourages students to interpret the concept of 'enterprise' in ways that are personally relevant to their particular aspirations, social contexts, and locations.

As a charity, OCA supports a curriculum that has a positive impact upon people's lives and society as a whole, and encourages engagement with enterprise that has a clear societal impact. This means undertaking external projects that can have a wider social benefit, and developing practices that are socially aware and environmentally sustainable.

To encourage this, learning materials and activities provides a framework for students to begin to define, establish and sustain their practices at a variety of scales and ambitions, and encourage students to think about freelance, employment, social enterprises, or entrepreneurship outcomes. A focus on research and ethics helps to frame these activities within wider social contexts. Students are also encouraged to undertake collaborative projects with other students, and to work on competition briefs or other external opportunities.

A key benefit of distance learning is in allowing self-sustaining ways of developing a creative practice to build over time, and by balancing study/work/life commitments. Students can establish studio spaces and build resources throughout their studies, to feel prepared and equipped at the end of their course. Therefore, enterprise related themes are embedded through the course to encourage this sustainable approach.

An Enterprise Hub will provide a central online resource to support self-directed student activities. The Hub will provide guidance and resources on key enterprise themes, such as establishing and undertaking external projects/work-related learning, working collaboratively, establishing business or enterprise opportunities such as external exhibitions, business plans, or social enterprises, and connecting to appropriate professional networks.

OCA will use the Enterprise Hub to help establish relationships with other organisations, businesses, and funding opportunities. These in turn will provide the potential for business incubators, mentoring options, internship opportunities and enable access to seed-funding for students.

Section G - Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

The course is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 5 years. This process ensures that the course engages with the applicable national Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All courses are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:
▪ External Examiner's Reports
▪ Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
▪ Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
▪ Feedback from Student Course Representatives