**UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:**

**MA 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 | Open College of the Arts | | |
| Final Award Title and Type | Master of Arts | | |
| Course Title | Graphic Design | | |
| Course Location and Length | Campus: OCA | | Length: 2 years[2] |
| Mode of Study | Full-time | | Part-time ✓ |
| Period of Validation | 2020/21 – 2024/25 | | |
| Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body | Not Applicable | | |
| Type of Accreditation | Not Applicable | | |
| Accreditation due for renewal | Not Applicable | | |

Entry criteria and requirements[3]

All applicants to the MA Graphic will be required to complete the OCA Master's application form, submit a written statement and a recent portfolio of artwork in order to be considered for the course.

The written statement will detail reasons for wishing to join the course and the portfolio of artwork will have been produced during the two years prior to application.

Then, OCA will normally accept students onto the course who can apply and claim for 50 points, made up from any of the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| A degree in any subject | 40 points |
| A degree in the visual arts | 50 points |
| Evidenced experience of working in any relevant creative industry or context. For example, as a practicing Fine Artist | 50 points |
| Higher National Diploma/Foundation degree or equivalent in Art | 30 points* |
| Higher National Certificate or equivalent in Art | 20 points* |
| A-Level Art or equivalent | 10 points* |
| Other experience or learning, whether certified or not, will be considered on an individual basis. | |

Equivalency to the qualifications stated, include international qualifications provided these are accompanied by a UK NARIC equivalency certificate, and/or un-certificated training or work

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[1] Regulated by the Office for Students
[2] Entry points in October, February and June
[3] This should be the standard University Criteria unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and include UCAS entry profile for undergraduate courses.

experience to an equivalent level. In all cases acceptance is at the discretion of Open College of the Arts.

English Language Competency:

All students need to have an appropriate standard of English to complete their chosen course of study, which will include a substantial written element. International or EU students will need to provide evidence of their ability. Full details on each of these requirements can be found in the OCA Student Regulations in the section Admission Requirements.

IT Competence

Prospective MA students are required to complete a self assessment IT test compiled by OCA and sign a statement to demonstrate that they understand the level of IT ability that is required of them. The level required is described as follows:

*This programme is conducted centrally online. It is therefore essential that you are adept at communicating and using online tools. Are you a fluent IT User and familiar with using the web, and web-based tools such as Skype and /or Google Hangout, blog interfaces etc with confidence, as well as uploading and downloading documents, images and video files.*

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.

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 Learner Support Team.

| Overall methods of assessment[4] | Written exams: | Practical exams: | Coursework: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Course | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| Overall Learning & Teaching hours[5] | Scheduled: | Independent: | Placement: |
| Course | 10.3% | 89.7% | 0.0% |
| | 186 hours | 1614 hours | 0 hours |
| General level of staff delivering the course[6] | 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 | | |

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

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

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

| Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement: |
|---|
| • QAA Master's Degree Characteristic Statements |

| Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) |
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**The course structure**

The structure of all OCA undergraduate awards awarded by the University complies with the Common Credit Framework.

The Common Credit 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MA Graphic Design** | | | | | |
| GF7RAP - MA Graphic Design 1.1 Research and Practice (OGRD7001) | 7 | 60 | Core | N/A | 1 |
| GD7IAD - MA Graphic Design 1.2 Innovation and Development (OGRD7002) | 7 | 60 | Core | N/A | 2 |
| GD7RES - MA Graphic Design 1.3 Resolution and Presentation (OGRD7003) | 7 | 60 | Core | N/A | 3 |

**Section B - Course Overview**

The MA in Graphic Design at OCA provides a flexible way for you to develop your creative graphic design practice. As a part-time, open, enhanced, and supported distance learning experience, the course provides an inclusive platform to engage with postgraduate study.

The course sees contemporary graphic design as a range of interdisciplinary fields that span traditional graphic design practices, communication design, graphic arts, and aspects of lens based, digital media and moving image. It also recognises the diversity of the creative industry in terms of scale and location of professional practices. Course content and activities provide a stimulating framework to apply a specialist knowledge and highly fluent understanding of graphic design, supported by specialist graphic design tutors. With a strong emphasis on group based critiques and seminars, the course offers a rich discursive environment in which specialist knowledge and subject boundaries can be discussed and shaped collectively, with the input of tutors, and informed through engagement with relevant academic literature and lectures.

As distance learners, the course encourages you to develop specialist research and graduate skills by undertaking a range of self-directed projects. As a result, the course aims to develop creative practitioners who are adaptable, resilient, independent, and can sustain personally meaningful and professional practices. To support this, the course offers opportunities to collaborate, encourages

external projects and networking, and provides guidance on professional practice through an Enterprise Hub.

**Unit 1:**
**1.1. Research and Practice**
The unit supports you in developing an advanced awareness of graphic design through practical projects and independent research. The aim of the unit is to develop a highly critical and creative conversation between your practice and research interests. This will introduce you to:
- innovate professional design practices
- relevant academic literature and theories
- current debates around graphic design and its subject boundaries
- strategies to apply research and practice to inform your creative approach and critical position.

**Unit 2:**
**1.2. Innovation and Development**
The unit encourages you to apply specialist graphic design skills by undertaking projects with a focus on professional practice, enterprise, collaboration, or other external partners. The aim of the unit is to apply specialist design skills in research, creativity, critical-thinking and problem-solving, and to develop a professional understanding of how to operate as a graphic designer.

**Unit 3:**
**1.3. Resolution and Presentation**
The unit provides the opportunity to identify, develop and manage a substantial self-directed project, and presenting the outcomes through suitable publications, exhibitions or presentations. The aim of the unit is to apply highly fluent creativity to resolve professional and innovative ideas. A Professional Practice folder will gather and reflect on external facing aspects of the project.

A contextual study in Unit 1 provides an opportunity to demonstrate your advanced awareness of contextual knowledge and critical thinking. In Unit 2 you can explore ideas through a contextual study, or produce a suitable project report or business case. These can be developed through written, presentation, or visual essay formats. Throughout the course you will document your work through a learning log and produce reflective presentations to help synthesize your learning.

**Section C - Course Aims**

1. Widen access to graphic design education at postgraduate level through an open, enhanced, and supported distance learning experience;
2. To encourage engagement with current and relevant subject knowledge and to test the boundaries of graphic design through contextual research and consideration of your future practice;
3. To provide opportunities to learn collaboratively, through engaging in constructive and critical dialogue that connects you with a community of designers and researchers;
4. To encourage informed and focussed independent learning and self-directed projects;
5. To provide a framework to help inform, test, and reflect on your creative approach, critical positions, and wider contexts for your work;
6. To encourage a highly critical and creative conversation between your practice and research interests;
7. To promote inclusive and intercultural approaches to research and practice;
8. To enable the development and application of specialist graphic design knowledge, skills, and understanding to produce innovative and professional outcomes;
9. To develop highly fluent communication skills and advanced personal skills to effectively communicate project outcomes and reflect on the results through presentations.
10. To foster independent learning, self-direction; resilience, and ability to establish and maintain your creative practice in personally meaningful ways;
11. To encourage thoughtful, adaptable, ethical, sustainable, safe, and professional design practices.

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**Section D - Course Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

Knowledge
LO1     Identify, define, and describe current and relevant principles, concepts and subject knowledge to a high level.
LO2     Demonstrate an advanced awareness of the use of graphic design skills, technologies, methods, practices and processes related to your design practice.
LO3     Identify, define, and describe contemporary and historical practices, theories, and debates to inform your creative approach and critical position.
LO4     Navigate and critique emerging practices and wider contexts, to shape your subject knowledge of graphic design and its subject boundaries.

Understanding
LO5     Select, question, test, interpret and synthesize relevant and specialist knowledge to inform your intentions, ideas, and outcomes
LO6     Apply highly fluent critical thinking to develop an informed personal position through critique, group work, and critical thinking tasks
LO7     Apply curiosity, creativity, and intellectual enquiry to initiate, test, and articulate ideas and outcomes in professional and innovative ways

Application
LO8     Select, test and use relevant materials, media and techniques to resolve and present innovative ideas and solutions through project work, publication and/ or exhibitions.
LO9     Apply specialist technical graphic design skills and processes to develop and produce professional outcomes
LO10    Employ highly fluent communication skills to effectively present ideas, intentions, and outcomes through self-initiated, client-led, competition, and/or collaborative projects.
LO11    Use advanced personal and transferable skills to effectively sustain independent learning and reflect on progress as an independent designer
LO12    Apply transferable and graduate skills in sustaining appropriate professional practices and standards through undertaking ethical research, group work, and in your relationships with the creative industries

**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