Programme specification

1. Overview/ factual information

Programme/award title(s)	MA Graphic Design
Teaching Institution	Open College of the Arts
Awarding Institution	The Open University (OU)
Date of first OU review	June 2022
Date of latest OU review	
Next review	
Credit points for the award	180
UCAS Code	
JACS Code	
Programme start date	
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	QAA Master's Degree Characteristic Statements
Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes	
Professional/statutory recognition	
Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face)	PT DL
Duration of the programme for each mode of study	2 years
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	N/A
Date of production/revision of this specification	June 2022

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in student module guide(s) and the students handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

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.

2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards
(Where the award is part of a hierarchy of awards/programmes, this section describes the articulation between them, opportunities for progression upon

completion of the programme, and arrangements for bridging modules or induction)
Students who choose not to pursue the full MA award may be considered for an exit award of a PGCert or PGDip

2.3 For Foundation Degrees, please list where the 60 credit work-related learning takes place
N/A

2.4 List of all exit awards
PGCert Graphic Design PGDip Graphic Design MA Graphic Design

3. Programme structure and learning outcomes

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">Programme Structure - LEVEL 7</th></tr>
<tr><th>Compulsory modules</th><th>Credit points</th><th>Optional modules</th><th>Credit points</th><th>Is module compensatable?</th><th>Semester runs in</th></tr>
<tr><td>MA Graphic Design 1.1 Research and Practice (GF7RAP)</td><td>60</td><td>N/A</td><td>N/A</td><td>NO</td><td>N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td>MA Graphic Design 1.2 Innovation and Development (GD7IAD)</td><td>60</td><td>N/A</td><td></td><td>NO</td><td>N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td>MA Graphic Design 1.3 Resolution and Presentation (GD7RES)</td><td>60</td><td>N/A</td><td></td><td>NO</td><td>N/A</td></tr>
</table>

Intended learning outcomes at Level 4 are listed below:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 7</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">3A. Knowledge and understanding</th></tr>
<tr><th>Learning outcomes:</th><th>Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods</th></tr>
<tr><td>A1 Identify, define, and describe current and relevant principles, concepts and subject knowledge to a high level.</td><td>**Course materials** delivered through OCA Learn an online learning environment through a combination of written, audio and audio visual and links to external online content.</td></tr>
</table>

Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 7	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
A2 Navigate and critique emerging practices and wider contexts, to shape your subject knowledge of graphic design and its subject boundaries. A3 Select, question, test, interpret and synthesize relevant and specialist knowledge to inform your intentions, ideas, and outcomes A4 Apply highly fluent critical thinking to develop an informed personal position through critique, group work, and critical thinking tasks A5 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	**Activities** such as exercises, research tasks, lectures, seminars, online workshops, forums, digital creative arts studio space and assignments. **Contextual information** is provided within the course materials, online library as written and video content and links to other digital material. **Critical reviews**, either written or audio visual, where students connect practice with research. **Skills Hub** to facilitate all discipline specific skills learning for the application of relevant skills content to students ideas and programme learning. Coursework Self-directed individual learning produced and recorded in the form of a learning log/online blog and portfolio presentation, including a personal framework. **1 - 1 tutorials or written formative feedback**, to reinforce individual understanding and ensure learning is in line with learning outcomes. **Group tutorials** to evaluate and support the development of knowledge and understanding. **Summative assessment** is carried out digitally with students providing links to their online learning logs, images and videos of work and a written or video reflective evaluation

3B. Cognitive skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
B1 Identify, define, and describe current and relevant principles, concepts and subject knowledge to a high level.	**Course materials** delivered through OCA Learn an online learning environment through a combination of written, audio and audio visual and links to external online content.
B2 Identify, define, and describe contemporary and historical practices, theories, and debates to inform your creative approach and critical position.	**Activities** such as exercises, research tasks, lectures, seminars, online workshops, forums, digital creative arts studio space and assignments.
B3 Navigate and critique emerging practices and wider contexts, to shape your subject knowledge of graphic design and its subject boundaries.	**Contextual information** is provided within the course materials, online library as written and video content and links to other digital material.
B4 Select, question, test, interpret and synthesize relevant and specialist knowledge to inform your intentions, ideas, and outcomes	**Critical reviews**, either written or audio visual, where students connect practice with research.
B5 Apply highly fluent critical thinking to develop an informed personal position through critique, group work, and critical thinking tasks	**Skills Hub** to facilitate all discipline specific skills learning for the application of relevant skills content to students ideas and programme learning. Coursework Self-directed individual learning produced and recorded in the form of a learning log/online blog and portfolio presentation, including a personal framework.
B6 Apply curiosity, creativity, and intellectual enquiry to initiate, test, and articulate ideas and outcomes in professional and innovative ways	**1 - 1 tutorials or written formative feedback**, to reinforce individual understanding and ensure learning is in line with learning outcomes.

3B. Cognitive skills	
B7 Employ highly fluent communication skills to effectively present ideas, intentions, and outcomes through self-initiated, client-led, competition, and/or collaborative projects B8 Use advanced personal and transferable skills to effectively sustain independent learning and reflect on progress as an independent designer B9 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	**Group tutorials** to evaluate and support the development of knowledge and understanding. **Summative assessment** is carried out digitally with students providing links to their online learning logs, images and videos of work and a written or video reflective evaluation

3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
C1 Demonstrate an advanced awareness of the use of graphic design skills, technologies, methods, practices and processes related to your design practice C2 Navigate and critique emerging practices and wider contexts, to shape your subject knowledge of graphic design and its subject boundaries.	**Course materials** delivered through OCA Learn an online learning environment through a combination of written, audio and audio visual and links to external online content. **Activities** such as exercises, research tasks, lectures, seminars, online workshops, forums, digital creative arts studio space and assignments. **Contextual information** is provided within the course materials, online library as written and video content and links to other digital material.

3C. Practical and professional skills	
C3 Select, question, test, interpret and synthesize relevant and specialist knowledge to inform your intentions, ideas, and outcomes C4 Apply highly fluent critical thinking to develop an informed personal position through critique, group work, and critical thinking tasks C5 Apply curiosity, creativity, and intellectual enquiry to initiate, test, and articulate ideas and outcomes in professional and innovative ways C6 Select, test and use relevant materials, media and techniques to resolve and present innovative ideas and solutions through project work, publication and/ or exhibitions. C7 Apply specialist technical graphic design skills and processes to develop and produce professional outcomes C8 Employ highly fluent communication skills to effectively present ideas, intentions, and outcomes through self-initiated, client-led, competition, and/or collaborative projects C9 Use advanced personal and transferable skills to effectively sustain independent learning and reflect on progress as an independent designer	**Critical reviews**, either written or audio visual, where students connect practice with research. **Skills Hub** to facilitate all discipline specific skills learning for the application of relevant skills content to students ideas and programme learning. Coursework Self-directed individual learning produced and recorded in the form of a learning log/online blog and portfolio presentation, including a personal framework. **1 - 1 tutorials or written formative feedback**, to reinforce individual understanding and ensure learning is in line with learning outcomes. **Group tutorials** to evaluate and support the development of knowledge and understanding. **Summative assessment** is carried out digitally with students providing links to their online learning logs, images and videos of work and a written or video reflective evaluation

3C. Practical and professional skills	
C10 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	

3D. Key/transferable skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
D1 Demonstrate an advanced awareness of the use of graphic design skills, technologies, methods, practices and processes related to your design practice D2 Select, question, test, interpret and synthesize relevant and specialist knowledge to inform your intentions, ideas, and outcomes D3 Apply curiosity, creativity, and intellectual enquiry to initiate, test, and articulate ideas and outcomes in professional and innovative ways D4 Select, test and use relevant materials, media and techniques to resolve and present innovative ideas and solutions through project work, publication and/ or exhibitions. D5 Apply specialist technical graphic design skills and processes to develop and produce professional outcomes	**Course materials** delivered through OCA Learn an online learning environment through a combination of written, audio and audio visual and links to external online content. **Activities** such as exercises, research tasks, lectures, seminars, online workshops, forums, digital creative arts studio space and assignments. **Contextual information** is provided within the course materials, online library as written and video content and links to other digital material. **Critical reviews**, either written or audio visual, where students connect practice with research.

3D. Key/transferable skills	
D6 Employ highly fluent communication skills to effectively present ideas, intentions, and outcomes through self-initiated, client-led, competition, and/or collaborative projects D7 Use advanced personal and transferable skills to effectively sustain independent learning and reflect on progress as an independent designer D8 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	**Skills Hub** to facilitate all discipline specific skills learning for the application of relevant skills content to students ideas and programme learning. Coursework Self-directed individual learning produced and recorded in the form of a learning log/online blog and portfolio presentation, including a personal framework. **1 - 1 tutorials or written formative feedback**, to reinforce individual understanding and ensure learning is in line with learning outcomes. **Group tutorials** to evaluate and support the development of knowledge and understanding. **Summative assessment** is carried out digitally with students providing links to their online learning logs, images and videos of work and a written or video reflective evaluation

Exit Award at HE7 PGCert Graphic Design - 60 credits
Exit Award at HE7 PGDip Graphic Design - 120 credits
Exit Award at HE7 MA Graphic Design - 180 credit

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, networking, audiences, 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/module 2: 1.2. Innovation and Development
The unit/module 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/module 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/module 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/module 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/module 1 provides an opportunity to demonstrate your advanced awareness of contextual knowledge and critical thinking. In Unit/module 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.

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5. Support for students and their learning

OCA Learn, provides an accessible virtual learning environment for learning materials, support, and other resources. Through OCA Learn you will access your course content and activities, submit your work for feedback from tutors, and engage in online group activities.

Course content is provided through written materials, recorded lectures, visiting speakers, and/or case studies, and is designed to be engaging and accessible. Course activities provide learning opportunities that are relevant, engaging, and adaptable. Both course content and activities offer a starting point to undertake self-directed learning to achieve your learning outcomes.

Tuition is provided at timetabled points during the academic calendar, through a mix of:

- **Synchronous group activities** offered as live events with supporting forums.
- **Tutorials** as 1-2-1 online sessions.
- **Feedback reports** offered as written or verbal formats.

- **Asynchronous group activities** within forums or other online platforms.

All forms of tuition offer formative feedback through constructive and well-grounded comments that aims to stretch and challenge learners at set points within the course. The balance of tuition is weighted towards live group activities and 1-2-1 tutorials because of the timetabled cohort delivery of this postgraduate.

Students should expect a minimum of 9 hours of tuition per 60 credit unit/module. Tuition is the amount of contact time academic staff will offer to students to deliver formative feedback.

Your degree has an online Department space, within OCA Learn, to help encourage academic dialogue and develop a learning community/module. This space will offer an overview of your degree, regular group activity opportunities, spaces to ask questions, signposting to additional support and/or resources, and access to your Programme Leader.

Online library access, reading lists, and additional resources are available via the Library page on OCA Learn. Library support is offered by a librarian, via 'Ask the Librarian' forums. Key reading lists are accessible electronically.

OCA Spaces provides students with a secure online journal service, to be used during your studies, and for tutor feedback and assessment. Templates are provided relevant to your course, along with guidance and support on setting up your online journal or learning log.

The Student Handbook, on OCA Learn, provides additional guidance, information, and support to all students to cover study skills, time management, and academic skills, and signposting to appropriate wellbeing, pastoral, or other support, provided by the Learner Support Team.

The Enterprise Hub, on OCA Learn, offers guidance on sustaining your creative practice, careers, employability, and other enterprise related opportunities throughout your studies. Group activities support the Enterprise Hub.

OCA Discuss, offers a forum platform to all students, to help encourage peer support.

WeAreOCA, provides a dynamic and collaborative space, across OCA learning communities, to test, discuss, showcase, journal, and support experiences of learning, teaching, and/or practices within the creative arts.

At the end of each unit/module , you will submit your work for summative assessment. The Assessment Guidance page, on OCA Learn, provides information on assessment, how best to prepare, and a forum to ask questions.

Support for assessment will be provided through group activities via your Department space.

6. Criteria for admission
All applicants must be aged 18 or over at point of over admission to the course OCA specifies four general requirements for students to be admitted to its programmes: 1. **English language competency** 2. **Access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access** 3. **Access to basic technology to document work,** 4. **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 Admissions Policy Students and prospective students are required to self certify their ability and confidence with Information Technologies as set out above as part of their application and enrolment to OCA. OCA bears no liability in this regard. Students may apply for an ICT Exemption where they have a medical reason, or disability, or other compelling reason (for example, service overseas) that may prohibit them from using ICT or be detrimental to them to use ICT. Cases for ICT exemption are considered by the Learner Support team, and evidence will be requested in support of your application. This may include medical documentation, Needs Assessments, or other documentation depending on the nature of your application 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. 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 learnersupport@oca.ac.uk.

All applicants to the MA Graphic Design 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.

Enrolment to any of OCA's Masters degrees is subject to the following entry criteria. Students will normally be accepted onto courses, where they can apply and claim for 100 points, made up as follows:

- A degree in any subject - 40 points
- A degree in a relevant subject - 50 points
- Evidenced experience of working in any relevant creative industry or context - 50 points
- Certificated and/or other training below degree level equating to three years or more of study - 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
- A written statement detailing reasons for wishing to join the course and what is hoped to be gained from it - 25 points*
- A portfolio of work produced during the last two years - 25 points*

*All applicants will be required to submit a minimum of a written statement and portfolio of artwork in order to be considered for the course.

7. Language of study

English

8. Information about non-OU standard assessment regulations (including PSRB requirements)

N/A

9. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

Effective learning and teaching is underpinned by regular quality checks, as outlined in the Quality Handbook, and routine evaluation and monitoring of provision, learning, teaching, and assessment.

Quality checks take place when course content and activities are initially designed. These ensure that learning materials meet the expectations of validated documents, assessment requirements, accessibility requirements, and are in line with the QAA Quality Code.

Annual Monitoring provides a quality process through which the curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment are evaluated by your Programme Leader. Annual Monitoring reports are reviewed by senior members of OCA staff, and an action plan established to help improve the course over the following academic year.

OCA collects feedback from students, formally and informally, to contribute to the Annual Monitoring process. OCA runs two internal surveys, the Unit/module Evaluation Survey which gathers feedback and opinions on individual unit/module experiences, and the Stage Analysis Survey which looks at perspectives across a whole stage of study. Informal evaluation and monitoring also takes place through the ongoing dialogue between students and academic staff. This is facilitated through group activities, student surveys, and forums. We also collect feedback from External Examiners that is outside the remit of the assessment process and academic standards of the course, which is communicated to the Programme Leaders and OCA Directors to note.

Feedback reports are subject to routine checks by OCA staff to ensure accuracy and consistency.

OCA uses a Peer Supported Review (P-SR) process to evaluate and develop teaching practices. This offers teaching observations, peer-to-peer discussions, and self-reflections, with a view to developing and enhancing teaching skills and knowledge.

Effective learning and teaching is informed through reflective practice. OCA supports academic staff to engage in relevant professional development through access to appropriate staff development opportunities. Training for academic staff is provided to fulfil the main duties of their roles. Where appropriate, further professional development will be provided. Reflective practice is supported

through academic team meetings, and through the Higher Education Academy Fellowship scheme.

10. Changes made to the programme since last (review
N/A