BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Postgraduate Programme
of Design Courses

leading to the award of
MA Design and Visualisation

MADV

STUDENT GUIDE

Contents

About this course

The MA Design and Visualisation course has the ambitious intention of challenging most of the conventional design presentation techniques in order to prepare its graduates for the future demands of a changing design profession. Alongside some standard essentials skills that you will require in design visualisation, we teach topics such as analogue visualisation, analytical practice, and professional practice.

This course shares modules from other existing postgraduate awards that have demonstrable success for over four decades. The course has emerged in line with changes in the design profession, education, and in response to changing demands of employers. A high percentage of our students will complete their programme of studies successfully and secure jobs in a variety of positions or pursue research degrees.

Students graduating from this course have benefited from a higher degree which allows them to pursue their career with a broader perspective and greater scope than was previously open to them. We select enthusiastic, committed and intellectually curious applicants who will be prepared to contribute to the critical intellectual engagements that make our course a worthwhile experience for both students and staff. Our varied teaching and assessment methods are geared towards promoting independent and deep learning.

The course is located in a school that provides a well-equipped learning environment at the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media. We also offer many other highly successful postgraduate and undergraduate design courses that add to the bustling life of the school. The course team is comprised of staff with substantial academic/professional experience, and is supportive of students' individual learning needs.
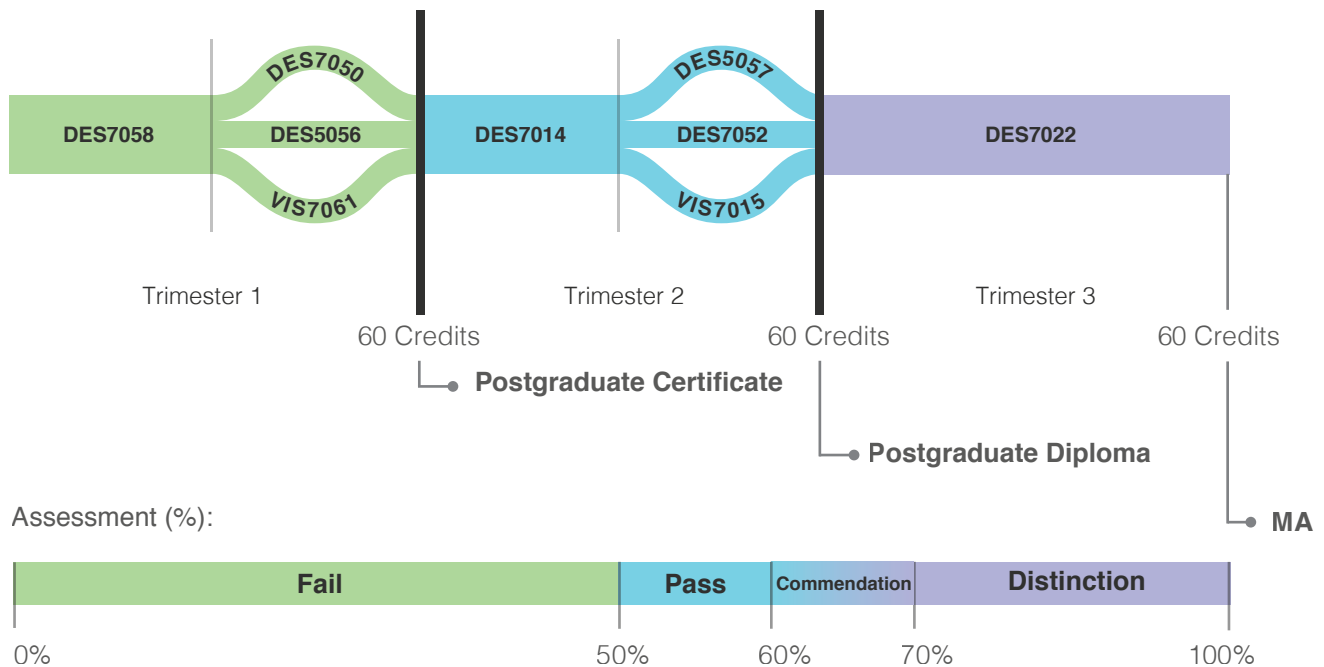
What we offer

- A small course intended to be around 15 full-time students each year, which means close, individual attention to students' learning needs. Part-time students (around five expected each year) join in with full-time students for modules as appropriate.

- A high quality, intellectually challenging and broad-based tuition in the skills and knowledge you will need to function effectively in a range of professional roles in the design industries, in the design education or in a research environment.

- A very accessible team of lecturers with expertise and experience in a wide range of subject areas of design practice, design research and related fields with particular interest in your learning experience.

- A very broad-based resource environment to aid your learning, including specialist workshops, computing facilities with hardware and software carefully specified to complement your own.

- A programme of studies that provides a learning experience in which key lectures are complemented by study support to underpin your personally chosen programme of study.

- An active and ambitious school with a broad-based portfolio of postgraduate courses that creates a lively environment for learning and other extra-curricula activities.

- A school that is based in one of the largest arts, design and media faculties in the UK, with a very diverse local, national and international student population that gives it a very cosmopolitan feel.

What you will study

- You will study design and visualisation based modules with a choice of modules studied by other postgraduate students in the school, plus a personally chosen project that accounts for approximately half of the MA credits.

| DES7058 | DES7050 / DES5056 / VIS7061 | DES7014 | DES5057 / DES7052 / VIS7015 | DES7022 |

Trimester 1 — Trimester 2 — Trimester 3

60 Credits — 60 Credits — 60 Credits

Postgraduate Certificate
Postgraduate Diploma
MA

Assessment (%):

Fail	Pass	Commendation	Distinction

0%   50%   60%   70%   100%

- All modules on the programme are credit-rated. Each of the three trimesters have 60 credits, making 180 credits for the award of MA. If you leave the course for any reason before accumulating 180 credits, you will be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate (60 accumulated credits) or a Postgraduate Diploma (120 accumulated credits).

- Your work will be assessed using the percentage system, where 50 per cent is the pass mark. If you pass all your assessed modules in trimester one, you will achieve a postgraduate certificate. If you pass all your assessed work in trimester one and two, you will get a postgraduate diploma. If you get a weighted average mark of 70 per cent or above for all three trimesters you will be awarded a MA with distinction.

- All standard (30 credit) modules on the programme are valued at 300 hours. This refers to the notional amount of time that it will require to study each module successfully.

- You will study digital visualisation techniques using the faculty's state-of-the-art equipment and the opportunity to use 'Milo', a robotic camera system which is also capable of digitally superimposing 3D virtual images within live video.

- Modules pursue several themes that help develop your design ability. These include: Techniques for design analysis and predictive models of design evolution which are used to develop new development methodologies.

- Case studies used on the course include examples of successful design development from recent collaborations between staff, students and industrial partners.

- Your personal project topic will be chosen by yourself, with guidance from your supervisor and can be based on any subject that focuses on your career aims and is relevant to the award for which you are enrolled on.

- The personal project research module prepares you for the critical investigation that forms the first part of your personal project and is delivered through a short series of key lectures, an intranet-based learning support programme and tutorial surgeries.

Design Visualisation

(30 credits - core) DES7058

This module will enable you to develop methodologies of visualisation in traditional techniques such as 2D sketching and technical illustration. The module will allow you to explore workshop based scaled model-making techniques using high-level 3D model making processes. It is also designed to develop skills in analogue, visualisation and other forms of advanced computer-based visualisation techniques that will enhance your knowledge and abilities required to act as a competent digital design specialist in presenting interactive media and virtual 3D models. You will learn to develop appropriate methods using software techniques to demonstrate understanding of a service sector or product, selecting and adapting methods as appropriate and evaluating the effectiveness of the chosen methods as applied in practice.

You may choose one module from the following three options according to your past experience and career aspiration:

Design Systems

(30 credits - option) DES5056

This module provides you with the opportunities to engage at an advanced level with the perspectives of commercial markets, design processes and models of design management. These inter-related 'design systems' will be defined by using a combination of theoretical and practical analysis applied to the evolution of contextually specific design sectors. In doing this, you will define alternative theorems and strategies relating to the construction and deconstruction of design ideas, mechanisms, and processes as part of your own design practice.

Realism

(30 credits - option) DES7050

This module provides you with a broader and clearer understanding of 'typical' product design outputs and the associated design processes that underpin them. Drawing from established theorems, policies and practice, including case studies, the core principles of product evolution are used to identify and appreciate the key issues that designers are likely to engage with at different stages of a product's development cycle. How new ideas, and/or technologies are ultimately applied at key evolutionary stages of a product's development (during or beyond) also depends upon the designer's individual approach to the design process. You are therefore shown how to recognise different design processes and then subsequently identify with the appropriate methodologies that suit your own personal approach.

# Analytical Practice

(30 credits - option) VIS7061

This module primarily develops analytical and evaluative skills which promotes critical awareness within an area of practice. This module allows for autonomy of learning and personal development planning (PDP) by using a variety of projects such as competition briefs or self-initiated projects to address unique learning needs.

Personal Project (Research and Concepts)

(30 credits - core) DES7014

A detailed investigation into the commercial, technical and human factors that apply to your chosen project (as developed through the tutorial/seminar programme and subject to the approval of the course staff). You will demonstrate mastery of the research techniques applied in earlier modules, resulting in a definitive project brief and either a formal project hypothesis or product concepts for evaluation and development. The module introduces you to a range of research methods, contexts, procedures and resources appropriate to the level and scope required for research practice. The hypothesis and learning methods developed results in a research report.
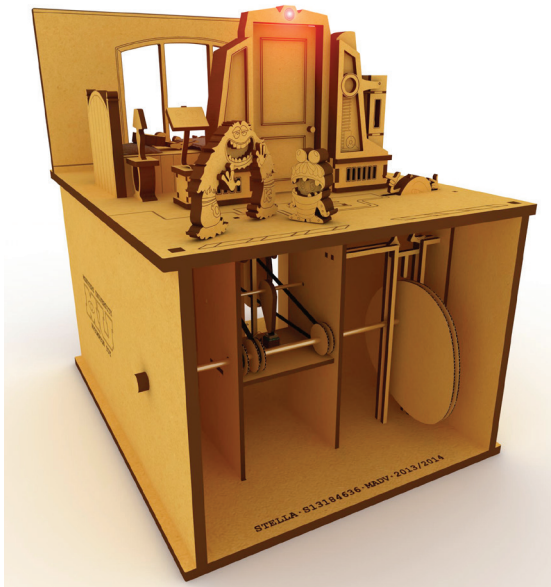
Design Futures

(30 credits - option) DES5057

This module provides you with the opportunities to engage in advanced conceptual and critical analysis that will aid the futuristic mapping of interior products and interior spaces. Predictive critical thinking will be focused specifically on the near horizon and longer-term future perspectives for specific interior design sectors. In doing this, you will define innovative 'post-optimal' theorems, case studies and trends which you can explore in relation to your own design process and practice.

Professional Practice

(30 credits - option) VIS7015

This module supports the advancement of your professional standing through engagement with externally generated briefs and ascribed parameters. It will develop your critical awareness of contemporary practice and advance your subject knowledge. You will be required to demonstrate self-direction and originality in undertaking problem-solving tasks and act autonomously in the planning and implementation of solutions at a professional level.

You may choose one module from the following three options according to past experiences and career aspiration:

Conceptualism

(30 credits - option) DES5057

This module provides you with the opportunities to engage with alternative notions of ideas and concept generation through deconstructing and then reconstructing new design-based narratives. By challenging the expectations and conventions of existing products, alternative directions and product opportunities are possible. Creative thinking will be focused specifically on the near horizon and longer-term future perspectives for specific product design sectors. In doing this, you will define innovative 'post-optimal' theorems, case studies and trends which can be further explored in relation to your own design process and practice.
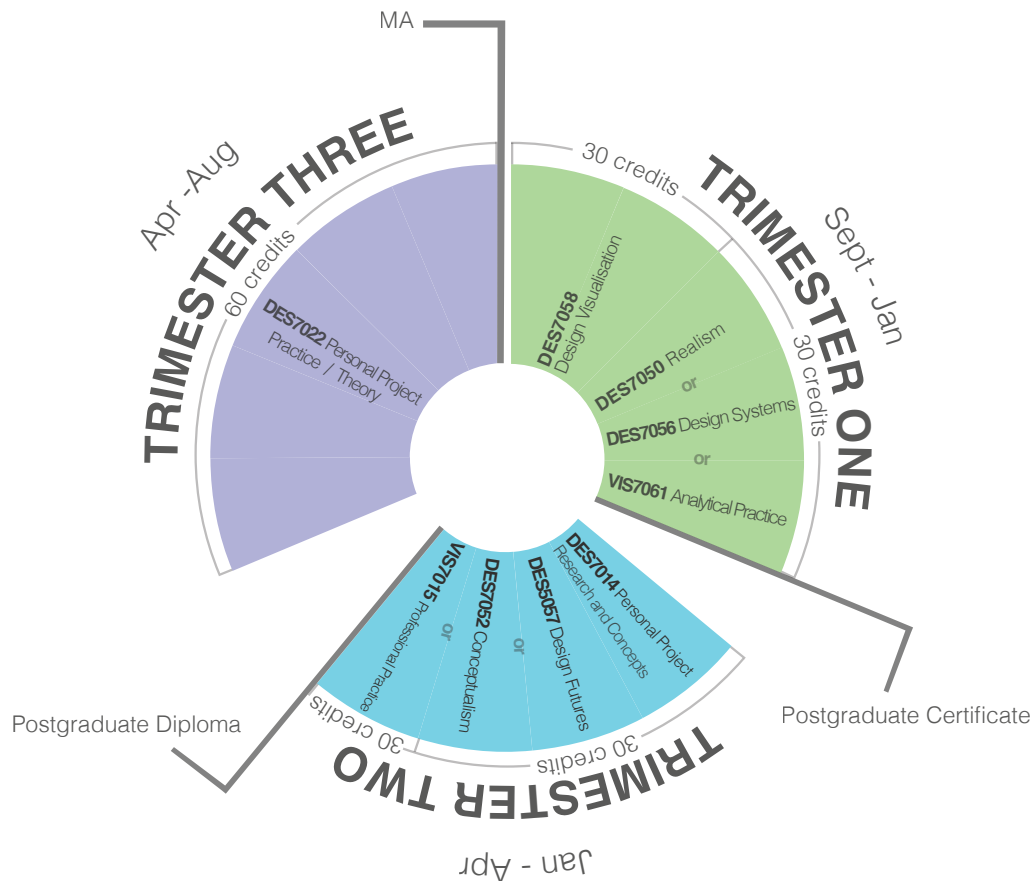
Personal Project (Practice / Theory)

(60 credits - core) DES7022

Either the evaluation and development of the design concepts from the previous module (practice-led), resulting in drawings, models and professional presentation of design features, or the testing of a project hypothesis, resulting in a substantial report supported by research findings or design work (theory-led) and a multimedia presentation of the project outcomes. Even the most practice-based projects must be presented in the context of relevant theory and the theory projects must contain some practical element (balance to be negotiated).
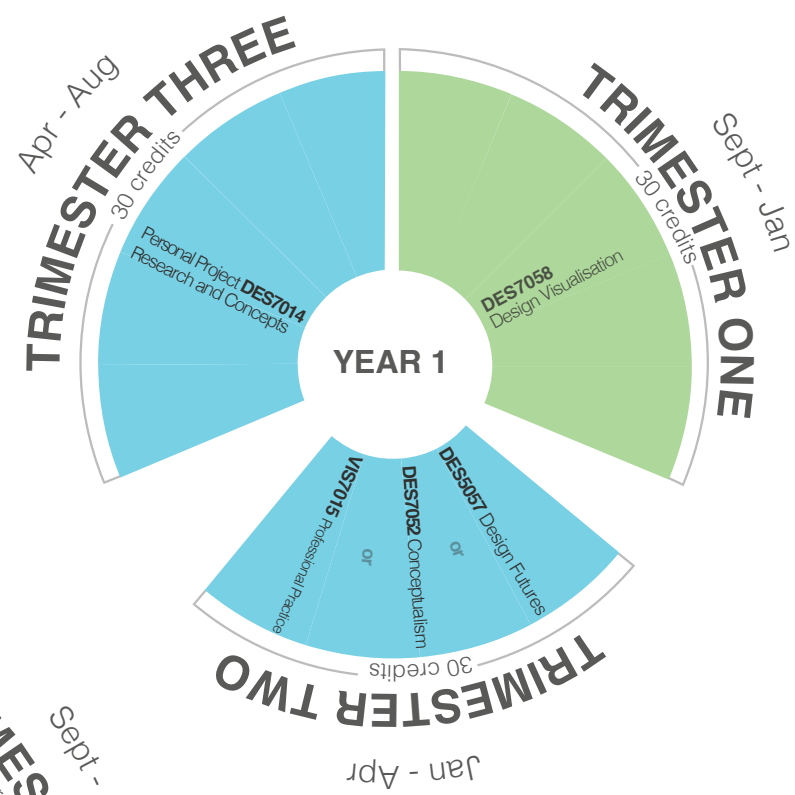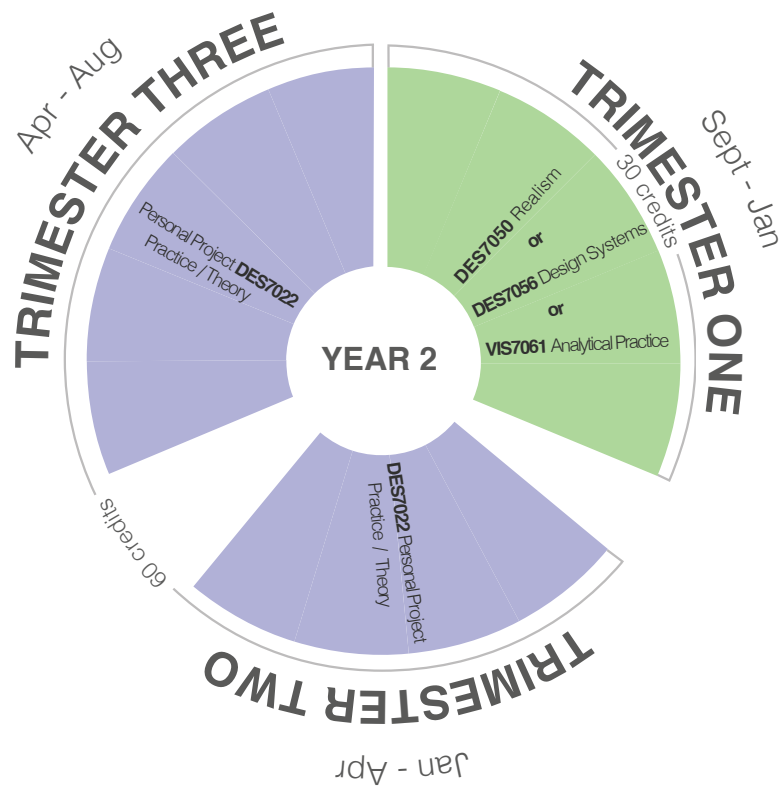
The length of the course

Full-time route:
The full-time course comprises 45 weeks within an academic year that starts and finishes in mid-September. The postgraduate certificate trimester one starts from September and ends in early January, the postgraduate diploma trimester two starts from early January and ends in late April and the Master's trimester three starts from late April and ends in August.

MA

Apr - Aug

TRIMESTER THREE

60 credits

DES7022 Personal Project
Practice / Theory

30 credits

TRIMESTER ONE

Sept - Jan

30 credits

DES7058 Design Visualisation

DES7050 Realism

or

DES7056 Design Systems

or

VIS7061 Analytical Practice

Postgraduate Certificate

DES7014 Personal Project
Research and Concepts

DES5057 Design Futures

DES7052 Conceptualism

or

VIS7015 Professional Practice

or

Postgraduate Diploma

30 credits

30 credits

TRIMESTER TWO

Jan - Apr

Part-time route:

Part-time students have a number of flexible options for completing their programme depending on their circumstances, including work-based learning contracts, normally taking two years, for those in appropriate design employment.

YEAR 1

TRIMESTER THREE — Apr - Aug — 30 credits
Personal Project **DES7014** Research and Concepts

TRIMESTER ONE — Sept - Jan — 30 credits
DES7058 Design Visualisation

TRIMESTER TWO — Jan - Apr — 30 credits
VIS7015 Professional Practice
or
DES7052 Conceptualism
or
DES5057 Design Futures

YEAR 2

TRIMESTER THREE — Apr - Aug — 60 credits
Personal Project **DES7022** Practice / Theory

TRIMESTER ONE — Sept - Jan — 30 credits
DES7050 Realism
or
DES7056 Design Systems
or
VIS7061 Analytical Practice

TRIMESTER TWO — Jan - Apr
DES7022 Personal Project Practice / Theory

A two-year programme – 52 weeks per year – six trimesters – four 30 credit modules and one 60 credit module. Students will attend for scheduled teaching and learning experiences for one day per week. The rest of the part time week is spent either developing 'toolbox' skills through arranged workshops, seminars and tutorials where students will participate in their assignment work through periods of 'self-directed study'.

*It is anticipated that part-time students will need to spend approximately 20 hours a week on assignments.

What you will come out with

- A more developed understanding of the main processes and structures of design including spatial design, the manufacturing industry, design practice and of products as digital artefacts.

- Technical competency in one or more of the mainstream software programs used in industry for digital visualisation.

- A more informed and confident skill set for conducting design research.

- A more developed ability to work with complex ideas and think analytically and reflectively.

- A range of transferable skills that employers prize highly: for instance the ability to work on your own initiative, be a good team worker, work to tight deadlines, flexibility, resourcefulness, the ability and willingness to learn quickly and independently, the ability to present yourself and your ideas coherently and persuasively.

Possible careers

A lot of our former students have gone on to use their acquired knowledge and skills in a variety of jobs including:

- Design practice: interior design, product design, graphic design, 3D visualisers, in-house and consultancy for TV characters, TV environments, TV motion graphics, advertising, films / VFX / PreVis, web banners / adverts, product configurators, posters (still and moving), iPads / tablets / apps, historical re-constructions, e-books / magazines, architecture, video games, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), marketing / comms, infographics / HUD's, navigation systems / TV/film credit sequences.

- Design advisory services such as digital training manuals, pathfinding, interfaces / GUI's.

- Education/training/research – as teachers/lecturers of design-related topics.

- Design research, as research assistants on funded projects, or as research students studying for an MPhil or PhD.

Our students

"The course has offered me a range of transferable skills that has enabled me to be competent within the design industry. Studying on this challenging yet interesting course has enhanced my analytical and reflective skills. Also, the supportive environment ensured that I learned the most from the projects through the tutors who are highly knowledgeable within their fields. I really enjoyed the course and I would certainly recommend it to students because of the variety of skills you learn and the brilliant facilities provided by the University."

Amanda Lao, MA Design and Visualisation 2013/14

"The MA Design and Visualisation course has transformed my design thinking by combining sophisticated technological processes and theory within industry-led projects. The design workshop has computer controlled CNC, laser and rapid prototyping systems which I have used in my projects. The diversity of facilities within the school has extended my transferable skills beyond my expectations and would recommend this course to other students who would like to increase their employability prospects."

Yihua GAO, MA Design and Visualisation 2013/14

How you can apply, or find out more about the course

You can get an application form by contacting the University on 0121 331 5000, or you can find more information about the course from the University's website at www.bcu.ac.uk

You can contact the course director:
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