

**1. Programmes:**

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>UCAS Code (Completed by Registry post approval)</b>	<b>GSA Code (Completed by Registry post approval)</b>
<b>Master of Design in Communication Design</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>MDCOMMDFT</b>

<b>Head of School</b>	<b>Irene McAra-McWilliam</b>
<b>Head of Department</b>	<b>Barbara Ridley (Acting)</b>
<b>Programme Contact</b>	<b>Brian Cairns</b>

<b>Minimum Duration of Study</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Maximum Duration of Study</b>	
<b>Mode of Study</b>	<b>Full-time</b>
<b>Award to be Conferred</b>	<b>Master of Design in Communication Design</b>
<b>Exit Awards</b>	<b>Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma MDes in Communication Design</b>
<b>Source of Funding</b>	<b>Self-funding</b>

<b>Version</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Date of Approval</b>
1.0	2016/17	Session 2011/12

**3. SCQF Level:**

11

**3.1 Credits:**

240

**4. Awarding Institution:**

University of Glasgow

**5. Teaching Institutions:**

The Glasgow School of Art

**6. Lead School/Board of Studies:**

School of Design

**7. Programme Accredited By:**

None

**8. Entry Qualifications**

<b>8.1 Highers</b>	N/A
<b>8.2 A Levels</b>	N/A
<b>8.3 Other</b>	<p>Admission to the MDes in Communication Design programme can occur at any time during the academic year; the admissions cycle begins in late September for intake in the following September. Although there are no deadlines, early application is encouraged in order to ensure a place on the programme.</p> <p>All applicants should normally have a good honours degree in a relevant subject area or equivalent professional practice. The admissions requirements for the MDes in Communication Design programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a fully completed application form, including two references;</li> <li>• submission of a 500 word written text outlining personal motivation for undertaking postgraduate study, and specific reasons for applying to the programme;</li> <li>• submission of a portfolio of work (20-30 images, at 300 dpi, with an accompanying image list);</li> <li>• demonstration of critical awareness at interview (if conducted).</li> </ul> <p>Overseas applicants who are unable to attend for interview must submit the proposal and portfolio work. In addition, a telephone interview may be required. Overseas applicants for whom English is not their first language should normally obtain a minimum score of 6.0 in the IELTS test or equivalent.</p>
<b>8.4 IELTS Score Required on Entry</b>	6.0 or equivalent

**9. Programme Scope:**

The two year programme in Communication Design is a broad one that can accommodate practice being produced by students working both within and between specialist areas of Visual Communication. Students on the programme can explore their individual specialisms in the areas of photography, illustration and graphic design, should they wish to remain within such parameters. At the same time, students troubling the boundaries of specialist practice within Communication Design are not confined to one area of production; indeed, the programme's structure and content delivery support and facilitate interdisciplinary work. The programme format adopted by this programme is a two year, 240 credit 'higher masters' model, similar to that of GSA's MFA

programme. The sustained length of the programme enables its students to devote additional time to the production of an enhanced portfolio of work.

#### **10. Programme Aims:**

The MDes in Communication Design is practice-led and process-oriented in relation to definitions of broad design practices. It is also committed to the acquisition of principles within design theory relating to educational and commercial contexts. The programme provides rigorous methods for the interrogation of visual and textual research, posing questions relating to the role of the designer in society, and fundamental questions regarding personal and social responsibility.

The programme aims to:

- Offer each individual student the opportunity to critically develop his or her own work in the context of a rigorous but supportive intellectual climate;
- Encourage students to identify and explore key contextual issues relevant to their practice as contemporary designers;
- Develop students' awareness and knowledge base in communication design philosophy, theory, practice and research in the context of innovative forms of communication design;
- Enable Communication Design graduates to critically evaluate their work and that of their peers in the context of contemporary design practices;
- Enable students to achieve the highest possible standards in their work, so that graduates have the confidence, maturity and intellectual and interpersonal skills necessary to function successfully in the communication design field;
- Equip students with the highly developed intellectual, practical and interpersonal skills deemed necessary for careers in design.

#### **10.1 Stage 1 Aims:**

##### **Stage 1 (Pg Cert) – Weeks 1 to 15: 60 credits**

The programme aims at Stage 1 are designed to allow students the opportunity to acquire and understand the key principles of theory, research and practice within the field of Communication Design. Students successfully completing this stage of the programme can advance to Stage 2 (PG Dip).

Stage 1 of the taught postgraduate programme in Communication Design aims to offer each student the opportunity to:

- develop a critical understanding of the principles and rationale for reappraisal of previous work;
- acquire a basic understanding of the principles and rationale of independent research;
- develop work for publication and/or display within a critical feedback session;

- begin to articulate his/her own perspectives on design, authorship and collaboration;
- respond to the views and positions of others, and to offer substantial constructive criticism to others;
- develop an awareness of the ethical issues arising from design and research practice, in both education and industry.

### **10.2 Stage 2 Aims:**

#### **Stage 2 (Pg Dip) – Weeks 16 to 30: 60 credits**

The programme aims at Stage 2 are designed to build upon and develop a greater understanding of the production processes and craft skills as well as the conceptual and research components acquired in Stage 1. Students will be expected to develop a proposal of study outlining their intended area of research at Masters level. Students successfully completing this stage of the MDes programme can advance to the Masters stage, Stage 3.

Stage 2 of the taught postgraduate programme in Communication Design aims to offer each student the opportunity to:

- develop an understanding of the critical balance between research and practice in the planning of a significant project within Communication Design;
- acquire an enhanced understanding of studio practice in relation to interdisciplinary contexts;
- develop a body of work for public display that reflects contemporary discourses in design to a professional standard;
- attain the capacity to undertake appropriate research in order to define and develop a relevant topic of inquiry;
- acquire a heightened awareness of his/her own position within and contribution to the wider contexts of design practice, including the ability to present and discuss his/her own work to designers and non-designers;
- develop the ability to make informed choices regarding the multidisciplinary aspects of the development of individual learning experiences.

### **10.3 Stage 3 Aims:**

Stage 3 programme aims are designed to offer the student the opportunity to develop an individual (or group) practice-led portfolio of work that demonstrates a conceptually considered, research-driven understanding of the theory, methodologies and practicalities of visual communication within a real world context.

Stage 3 of the MDes programme in Communication Design aims to offer each student the

opportunity to:

- learn how to make informed judgements and decisions in relation to current issues within Visual Communication practice, and contextualise one's own work within broader contemporary practices;
- develop a body of work for public display and/or publication for final assessment, which is a full articulation of the student's 'own voice';
- exercise autonomy, independence and rigorous critical analysis in the conception and production of a critical reflective journal and iterations toward a solution;
- attain skills of good practice and cooperation when working in professional contexts, including working constructively with others in a variety of institutional and professional situations.

**10.4 Stage 4 Aims:**

N/A

**10.5 Stage 5 Aims:**

N/A

**11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Programme:**

In relation to each stage of the programme, students should be able to:

**11.1 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 1**

**Knowledge and Understanding**

Demonstrate a knowledge of the contemporary context within which design practice occurs (technological, aesthetic, economic and theoretical).

Display a critical understanding of relevant concepts, principles, research methods and methodologies through project work and practice.

**Applied Knowledge and Understanding**

Display critical awareness of relevance of theoretical/practical resources and their role in constructing design problems.

Communicate to others the underlying theoretical and practical framework within which contemporary design activity occurs.

**Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others**

Numeracy - Demonstrate an ability to apply numerical reasoning to the practice of design.

IT Skills - Demonstrate an understanding of the application of IT systems in the design process.

Learning Skills - Develop skills to enable independent learning (self directed learning) of theoretical and practical processes.

Interactive and Group Skills - Develop group working skills through the completion of practical projects.

Professional Practice - Acquire an understanding of key production processes used within the creative industries and their relationship to contemporary design strategies.

**Application** (use of knowledge and understanding in actual situations) - Completion of set practical project(s) that demonstrate an understanding of the contemporary context of visual communication processes.

**Analysis** (breaking down complex situations into component parts) - Recognise and understand relationships between the various stages of the production pipeline in relation to visual communication.

**Synthesis** (combining elements to form new, coherent systems) - Illustrate an understanding of different processes and techniques within design practice.

**Evaluation** (forming value judgements based on clear criteria) - Ability to edit and select viable courses of action through practical projects.

**Problem-Solving** (formulating solutions to actual problem situations) - Demonstrate awareness of solutions to problems set in project assignments.

**Research Methods/Skills** (research management, use of information/technology) - Gain an understanding of the range of research methodologies used within design practices.

Research Methods - Acquire an understanding of research methodologies through the completion of a set of elective projects in relation to visual communication strategies.

Theoretical Issues - Acquire an understanding of theoretical debates and processes through the completion of set and elective projects, both written and practical, in relation to contemporary visual communication practices.

Practical Processes - Acquire a practical understanding of key principles in examples of contemporary design strategies.

## 11.2 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 2

### Knowledge and Understanding

A critical knowledge of design techniques and practices within contemporary culture and industry.

Demonstrate an understanding of visual communication through the presentation of suitable practical and theoretical project work.

### **Applied Knowledge and Understanding**

Identify, define and conceptualise new and abstract problems and relate these to issues of pertinence within visual communication.

Communicate to others a critical knowledge of appropriate research methods and their comparative efficacy.

### **Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others**

Numeracy - Demonstrate an ability to apply a range of numerical reasoning strategies to the practice of design and its contexts.

IT Skills - Communicate to others, using IT systems, an understanding of key principles in the design process.

Learning Skills - Develop advanced skills and independent problem solving skills of theoretical and practical processes, and an understanding of the collaborative processes within design practice.

Interactive and Group Skills - Further develop group working skills at a strategic level through the iterations of ideas and methods for completion of practical projects.

Professional Practice - Develop an in-depth knowledge of the social, technological and industrial drivers of design practices in contemporary culture.

**Application** (use of knowledge and understanding in actual situations) - Completion of an elective small-scale practical research project that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of visual communication.

**Analysis** (breaking down complex situations into component parts) - Recognise, understand and manage effectively different technical and creative approaches to the process of design.

**Synthesis** (combining elements to form new, coherent systems) - Illustrate and demonstrate a knowledge of complex processes and their combinations in relation to the production of group work within the context of visual communication.

**Evaluation** (forming value judgements based on clear criteria) - Pursue viable courses of action that demonstrate critical judgement through a practical project and proposal of study in relation to examples of visual communication.

**Problem-Solving** (formulating solutions to actual problem situations) - Demonstrate a range of solutions to set problems in group projects.

**Research Methods/Skills** (research management, use of information/technology) - Application of design research methods individually or in a small scale group project investigating visual communication.

Research Methods - Develop a knowledge of research methodologies within the context and

preparation of a research proposal in the area of visual communication.

Theoretical Issues - Apply a knowledge of theoretical concepts and processes through a written research proposal in relation to visual communication.

Practical Processes - Apply a knowledge and understanding of design and creativity through the completion of set and elective projects.

### **11.3 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 3**

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

The ability to plan and execute a significant research project that investigates either individual or group themes within the field of visual communication, and its relation to contemporary culture.

Demonstrate and reflect upon the uses of visual communication through the planning and execution of a Masters project.

#### **Applied Knowledge and Understanding**

Critically review and analyse existing problems, sources and knowledge in a manner that allows informed judgement and critical appreciation.

Communicate to a specialist audience a critical and reflective knowledge of visual communication through the execution of a Masters research project.

#### **Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others**

Numeracy - Demonstrate and critically reflect on the range and relevance of numerical/financial processes applied in the processes of design.

IT Skills - Demonstrate and communicate to others a critical and reflective knowledge of appropriate IT systems in relation to the production and communication of individual design projects.

Learning Skills - Demonstrate and communicate to others a sophisticated analysis and critical reflection on personal learning through the production of a Masters journal and project submission.

Interactive and Group Skills - Demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on the role of group dynamics and interplay as part of the production of a Masters project.

Professional Practice - Demonstrate to others a critical knowledge of key visual communication processes used within the creative industries through the production of a Masters research project and thesis.

**Application** (use of knowledge and understanding in actual situations) - Completion of a research project and thesis that explores an area of research in relation to visual communication.

**Analysis** (breaking down complex situations into component parts) - Recognise, understand, manage and critically reflect upon, to a high level, a range of technical and creative approaches to the processes of design.

**Synthesis** (combining elements to form new, coherent systems) - Combine complex processes in the production of a research project in relation to visual communication.

**Evaluation** (forming value judgements based on clear criteria) - Pursue a project to a professional standard with a rigorous academic reflection on the processes undertaken.

**Problem-Solving** (formulating solutions to actual problem situations) - Demonstrate and reflect on a range of solutions within an elective research project.

**Research Methods/Skills** (research management, use of information/technology) - Application and management of a research project in relation to visual communication in contemporary society.

Research Methods - Formulate and execute a research project within the area of visual communication.

Theoretical Issues - Demonstrate a critical and analytical review of the theoretical processes and concepts employed during the development and production of a research project.

Practical Processes - Formulate and complete an individual or group based research project, which demonstrates a critical awareness of conceptual and practical knowledge within the field of contemporary design.

#### **11.4 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 4**

Knowledge and Understanding

N/A

Applied Knowledge and Understanding

N/A

Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others

N/A

#### **11.5 Intended Learning Outcomes of Stage 5**

Knowledge and Understanding

N/A

Applied Knowledge and Understanding

N/A

Professional Practice: Communication, Presentation, Working with Others

N/A

## 12. Assessment Methods:

There will be three summative assessment points throughout the programme, each representing an exit qualification. Students may exit the programme with a Postgraduate Certificate after successfully completing Stage 1, or a Postgraduate Diploma after successfully completing Stage 2. Interim awards will need to be surrendered if a student resumes their studies and successfully achieves a higher exit award.

The table below details the points in the programme where formal assessment is expected to take place.

Stage	Summative assessment points
Stage 1: PgCert	Week 15
Stage 2: PgDip	Week 30
Stage 3: Masters	Week 60

The process for the assessment of the 3 stages will comprise:

Internal assessment;

Common postgraduate exam board to agree awards and progression between Stages.

In addition, Stage 3 will also comprise an external assessment stage, which will be reported to the Final Exam Board. The assessment of the MDes Communication Design programme will be regulated by the GSA Code of Assessment, which follows the University of Glasgow postgraduate template.

The criteria of assessment are linked directly to the learning outcomes for the PgCert, PgDip and Masters stages of the programme.

The programme provides two forms of assessment, formative and summative. Formative assessment will take the form of seminars, tutorials, and so on, which provide the opportunity to refine and develop key principles in fields of enquiry, and to prepare for submission in the summative assessments, i.e. in assessed projects and coursework, and in the final submission for a Masters award, or in the case of those exiting at Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma level, for the assessed projects and coursework.

For all three stages of the programme, students will normally be assessed on the presentation of practical work, written submissions and/or verbal presentations. Each course will be examined against its specific Learning Outcomes.

**Pg Cert:** At the end of Stage 1, for those wishing to exit with a PgCert, assessment based on practical and/or written work will take place.

**Pg Dip:** At the end of Stage 2, assessment provides a point for those wishing to exit with the PgDip. Assessment consists of a review of practical and/or written work.

At this stage of the programme, students can elect to continue their study at Masters level. All students selecting this option must complete a proposal of study for the final Stage.

**Masters:** At the end of Stage 3, assessment consists of a review of practical work, written thesis/report and/or a verbal presentation. Interviews with the External Examiners may take place if the student has

been selected as part of the sample representing a cross section of the programme cohort's work.

### **13. Learning and Teaching Approaches:**

Students will be expected to take significant responsibility for the management of their learning. Emphasis will be placed on self-reliance and personal academic development.

The principal teaching strategies employed on this programme are:

#### Self Directed Learning and Research

In line with other taught postgraduate programmes at GSA, significant emphasis in the Communication Design programme is placed on self-directed study, from project design and development, to gaining theoretical knowledge through traditional research methods.

#### Lectures and Seminar

Lectures and seminars are used to disseminate theoretical, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues underpinning practical studio work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials or studio sessions or further enquiry in self-directed learning or research.

#### Design Workshops / Studio Sessions

Design workshops are practical classes in which ideas from lectures and seminars may be tested out, or new concepts introduced and explored. These may vary from IT sessions in which students are introduced to particular pieces of software, to practical modelling classes in which prototypes are designed and roughed. Depending on the focus of the workshop, students may work independently or in groups.

#### Critiques

The critique (or 'crit') is an important learning device used to generate peer debate regarding the overall success of concepts, and their practical realisation within the context of a project brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers and tutors through appropriate visual and verbal means (models, portfolios, Powerpoint, and so on). The crit enables the development of key presentation skills, and encourages students to give constructive feedback on each others work. Although facilitated and guided by staff, critiques allow students to fully explore all aspects of practical submissions.

#### Tutorials

The tutorial system is designed to provide academic support through individual meetings with staff. At these one-to-one meetings, individual projects and pieces of work are discussed, as well as progress on the programme overall. Tutorials are also a means where feedback from students concerning all aspects of the programme can be raised.

#### Guest Speakers

Input from visiting lecturers and guest speakers will enable postgraduate Visual Communication students access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial contexts.

## Enrichment of Learning Experience

Students on the Communication Design programme will be taught and supervised by research active staff. Staff research interests will directly inform curriculum content, enhancing research-teaching linkages. Although the School of Design has considerable staff expertise in the areas covered by the programme, guest speakers and visiting lecturers – academic researchers, industry professionals, practicing designers – will be brought in to run sessions covering other areas.

Students on the programme may negotiate access to the research activities and projects within the School of Design. From time to time it is recognised that student involvement in these projects is desirable for the following reasons:

Access to leading edge research germane to their programme of study  
Experience with businesses involved in visual communication  
A broader understanding of industrial contexts

However, it is also recognised that student involvement in live research projects has the potential to clash with course work and introduce unnecessary pressure. To ensure this does not happen, the following conditions will apply to ensure that such work is appropriate to the general area of study and properly managed academically within the framework of the course:

- The work involved should be in the general subject area of the programme and have direct relevance within course descriptors.
- The work should serve as a direct equivalent for the course work it is replacing.
- No additional requirements are added to course work or the assessment process.
- The time taken to undertake the work should be agreed in advance through discussion with programme staff.
- Proper recording of the tasks involved should be made in a manner consistent with normal course monitoring processes.
- Regular meetings with students and the programme leader will be held to monitor progress and ensure an appropriate and balanced workload.
- While it is noted that such work will be of benefit to students, it might also be the case that it will require additional periods of time.

All of the above should be the subject of a document signed by the student concerned and the programme and/or course leader.

A student led Postgraduate Forum takes place normally twice a term and is a social opportunity for postgraduates to meet and discuss issues common to postgraduate study and invite speakers of interest. The forum is organised centrally, between GSA's taught postgraduate programmes.

**14. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and Other External or Internal Reference Points:**

None

**15. Additional Relevant Information:****16. Programme Structure and Features:**

## Stage One: September - January

Courses		Credits
PGT core	Core Research Skills for PG	15
MDes core	Design Theory: CCCP	15
MDes core	Critical Reflection on Proposals	30
PgCert and exit		

## Stage Two: January - May

Courses		Credits
PGT elective	Elective, from PGT menu	15
MDes core	Contextualising Design Studio Practice	45
PgDip and exit		

## Stage Three: September - June

Courses		Credits
MDes core	Consolidation of Studio Practice	90
MDes core	Critical reflective journal	15
PGT elective	Elective, from PGT menu	15
MDes in Communication Design		

**17. Can exemptions be granted?**Yes  No 

If yes, please explain:

**18. Does the programme comply with GSA APEL policy?**Yes  No 

If yes, please explain:

**19. Are there any arrangements for granting advanced entry?**

Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

**20. Are there any arrangements for allowing students to transfer into the programme?**

Yes  No

If yes, please explain stating requirements and levels to where this can apply:  
Applications for entry into the programme for the Pg Dip and Masters Stages will be considered. However, previous postgraduate study experience would need to be equivalent to that provided by the earlier stages of the Communication Design programme.

**21. Are there any arrangements for allowing students to transfer into other programmes?**

Yes  No

If yes, please clarify: Although the programme is designed to be taken as a whole, students may leave the programme with PgCert and PgDip qualifications. It is possible that these could be used as the basis for transferring into an alternative programme of study part-way through.

**22. What are the requirements for progressing from each stage?**

Progression is monitored by the PGT exam boards at GSA, which are run according to GU regulations.

**23. Please confirm that the programme follows GSA Board of Examiner policy and procedures, including External Examiner participation:**

Yes  No

If no, please explain:

**24. Please explain programme management and committee arrangements up to, but not including, Boards of Study:**

Responsibility for the conduct of the programmes will rest with the Head of Visual Communication. A Student/Staff Consultative Committee will meet to consider operational matters for the programme, while the Examination Board will be responsible for the award of the degrees and for issues relating to progression. All Committees connected to the programme will operate according to standard procedures determined by the Academic Council of The Glasgow School of Art. The Student/Staff Consultative Committee will report to the School of Design Postgraduate Sub-Committee, which in turn reports to the School of Design Board of Studies, which reports to the GSA Postgraduate Committee.

**25. Please explain the systems and arrangements regarding:**

**a) Quality assurance of the management, operation and monitoring of the programme**

The teaching team will be led by the Programme Leader. The Programme Leader will have executive responsibility for the direction, coordination and administration of the programme. He/she will be primarily responsible for the initiation of programme developments, and will have particular responsibility for the monitoring of student progress and for the continuous monitoring of the quality of the programme in line with The Glasgow School of Art procedures.

In order to ensure that quality standards are monitored and the quality of provision continually enhanced, the MDes Communication Design programme will undertake the following:

- regular programme team meetings
- Student/Staff Consultative Committees
- Annual Programme Monitoring
- Quinquennial Periodic Review
- Institutional review in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The GSA committee structure can be found at the following link:

[http://www.gsa.ac.uk/media/875399/GSA\\_Committee\\_Structure\\_Web.jpg](http://www.gsa.ac.uk/media/875399/GSA_Committee_Structure_Web.jpg)

A full list of current GSA External Examiners for all programmes can be found at the following link:

<http://www.gsa.ac.uk/about-gsa/our-structure/academic-services/external-examiners/>

**b) Student feedback and representation**

Student Staff Consultative Committees, questionnaires and focus groups are the main ways of obtaining student feedback.

Students will have the opportunity to feedback through the Student/Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC), a forum for discussion about all aspects of the programme and student experience at the GSA. The SSCC will meet during each Stage of the Programme and will report to the School of Design's Postgraduate Sub-Committee.

Quality Enhancement Questionnaires are issued to students to obtain feedback on the quality of the programme delivery both within the specialist subject and School of Design as a whole. Feedback is sought through anonymous structured questionnaires. Programme specific questionnaires are issued at the end of each stage and Design School wide questionnaires are issued at the end of session.

**c) Programme based student support**

During Stages 1- 3, a supervisor will be appointed for each student, according to the subject area in which the student will conduct their research projects. In addition, a designated pastoral tutor will be available to students who may be experiencing welfare or personal problems that may affect their academic progress; typically, this will be the programme leader / Head of Department.

In anticipation of the learning and teaching support needs of a cohort which may include ESL students and dyslexic students, the programme will employ the same briefing guidelines used on the undergraduate Visual Communication programme to ensure a clear understanding of the teaching and learning experience.

Briefs will be dyslexia-friendly and use plain language (therefore clearer for all students). Academic and support staff contact time will be made explicit. Students will be aware of with whom and when they can expect contact. Reading lists and websites will be identified to encourage students to use independent study time effectively. Aims and level learning outcomes of the brief will be made clear. Work requirements and assessment criteria will be made explicit and will relate to the specified aims. Briefs will include a suggested timetable for students to assist them in managing their studio and independent study time effectively.