

MA in Information Design
For students entering Part 1 in 2011/2

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| Awarding Institution: | University of Reading |
| Teaching Institution: | University of Reading |
| Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s): | |
| Faculty: | Arts, Humanities and Social Science Faculty |
| Programme length: | 1 years |
| Date of specification: | 23/Aug/2011 |
| Programme Director: | Prof Paul Luna |
| Programme Advisor: | |
| Board of Studies: | Typography and Graphic Communication Board of |
| Taught Postgraduate Studies | |
| Accreditation: | |

Summary of programme aims

The programme aims to provide a thorough grounding in the principles and methods of information design. It aims to develop fluent, articulate, and reflective designers who are well-equipped to influence the direction of their subject and profession through their effective problem-solving abilities, through originality in their application of knowledge, and through their exercise of sound professional judgement under uncertain conditions. Information designers must by necessity be lifelong learners, so the programme aims to equip students with the appropriate skills.

Transferable skills

The course encourages the development of these transferable skills:

- effective communication in speech and writing
- critical analysis and coherent argument
- researching and evaluating evidence
- undertaking independent study
- project management
- using IT for complex design tasks
- using IT for research and information management

Programme content

| Code | Title | Credits | Level |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------|-------|
| TYMIDP | Information design: practice | 90 | 7 & 6 |
| TYMIDC | Information design: core module | 30 | 7 |
| TYMIDD | Information design: dissertation | 60 | 7 |

Part-time or modular arrangements

Part-time study lasts two years, with the practical module, TYMIDP, divided into two tracks. Full-time students undertake work on track A and track B simultaneously; part-time students undertake one track in each year. Assignments on the core module, TYMIDC, are undertaken in the first year. The dissertation module, TYMIDD, is normally undertaken during the second year.

Progression requirements

n/a

Assessment and classification

Teaching will be by means of lectures and seminars, oral presentations and writing assignments, studio sessions, demonstrations and critiques. Lectures and seminars run throughout the Autumn and Spring terms with some

seminars in the Summer term; practical projects run in all three terms. (Small deviations from this schedule may be made to accommodate visiting members of staff.

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory work

To pass the MA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall and have no mark below 40 in modules TYMIDD (dissertation) and TYMIDP (practice). In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the practice module and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the practice module and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For Postgraduate Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For Postgraduate Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

Admission requirements

This programme will suit qualified or experienced typographers and editorial designers, editors, and possibly people with backgrounds in professional communication and technical writing, applied linguistics, applied psychology, ergonomics, or usability engineering. Candidates for admission are normally required to have obtained a good first degree in a design or design-relevant subject. For exceptional candidates without such a degree, we ask for convincing evidence of relevant professional experience. We may ask for material evidence (e.g. of writing or design work) from any candidate.

Admissions Tutor: Professor Rob Waller

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support is provided by a wide array of services across the University, including: the University Library, the Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre (SEEC), In-sessional English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support Centre teams, IT Services and the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@il) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and advisers in the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and offers advice on accommodation, careers, disability, finance, and wellbeing. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions and runs workshops and seminars on a range of topics. For more information see www.reading.ac.uk/student

The University Library has a number of outstanding collections, including a major collection of British publishing archives (Bodley Head, Hogarth Press, Longman, Macmillan, Routledge, Chatto & Windus); the Mycroft Type Collection; the Rickards and John Lewis collections of ephemera; the Otto & Marie Neurath Isotype Collection; the Hans Schmoller collection of twentieth-century type specimens.

The Department of Typography & Graphic Communication provides introductory sessions on resources in the University Library and on Departmental collections and resources, and also induction in health and safety matters. New students receive the Handbook for taught postgraduate programmes (also available online). Students are offered a number of optional lecture and seminar series (from other Master's or final year undergraduate modules) which may enrich their understanding of the subject. We hold regular postgraduate seminars and staff research briefings, where research -related issues can be discussed in a more formal environment. A small number of Departmental computers are dedicated to postgraduates, who may draw upon Departmental IT support. The Department enjoys particularly close links with the St Bride Printing Library and Oxford University Press. It maintains informal connections with design institutions in Europe, the USA, South America, Australia, and India. It has links with a number of professional and scholarly institutions including Pira International, the Information Design Association, the International Institute for Information Design, and the Communication Research Institute of Australia. It also maintains a good informal network of contacts with the information design profession.

Career prospects

Graduates of the MA Information Design programme may expect to find their skills and experience in considerable demand among information design companies, periodical, newspaper, and book publishers, electronic publishers, museums and galleries, and also in higher education.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

There are no formal arrangements in place.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, understanding, skills, and other attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Principles of information design derived from professional practice and research.
2. Design processes and methods
3. Main currents of thought and practice in the development of information design
4. Competing interpretations, policies, and practices within information design.
5. Two specific areas of the subject in depth.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Lectures, seminars and tutorials (modules TYMIDC & TYMIDP)

Assessment

One 3,000-word essay or equivalent on historical, theoretical, or practical aspects of information design; one report
10,000 - 13,000 word dissertation

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - able to:

1. Exercise independent judgement
2. Locate, analyse, and explain relevant literature
3. Critically review and evaluate literature
- 4 Analyse and solve complex design problems.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1, 2, 3. Dissertation (TYMIDD): introductory seminars and workshops in research skills, and independent study in consultation with a supervisor, develop research skills.
4. Project and professional assignments provide the opportunity to analyse and solve complex design problems.

Assessment

One 3,000-word essay or equivalent on historical, theoretical, or practical aspects of information design; one report
10,000 - 13,000 word dissertation

C. Practical skills - *able to*:

1. Use appropriate working methods, produce and maintain a well-ordered and comprehensive work record
2. Analyse the problem posed by a brief, formulate an appropriate brief in response to a client's account of a problem, including an inventory of deliverables
3. Show independent initiative and explore alternative approaches to a problem
4. Apply synthetic skills in order to propose a creative, appropriate, and persuasive solution to a design problem, showing evidence of sensitivity to the needs of readers and users, visual judgement, and the ability to recognize and create genre attributes
5. Demonstrate craft skills and professional competence, such as fluent mark-making, accuracy, good use of tools, an understanding of the design aspects of production, and the planning of clear and comprehensive specifications
6. Present a body of practical information design work in a professional manner, supported by well-documented files of preliminary work and showing evidence of understanding of the design process.

D. Transferable skills - *able to*:

1. Effectively communicate in speech and writing
2. Critically analyse complex information and construct coherent argument
3. Research and evaluate evidence
4. Undertake independent study
5. Manage projects
6. Use IT for complex design tasks
7. Use IT for research and information management

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1-6: the environment for teaching and learning is provided by practical design projects and professional assignments (TYMIDP).

Assessment

1-6 are all assessed through practical design projects and professional assignments (TYMIDP).

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1: Dissertation (TYMIDD), core module (TYMIDC), projects and assignments in TYMIDP.
2. In all modules but in particular in dissertation (TYMIDD) and core module (TYMIDC)
3. Dissertation (TYMIDD) and core module (TYMIDC)
4. Dissertation (TYMIDD), core module (TYMIDC)
5. Projects and in particular professional assignments in TYMIDP.
6. Projects and professional assignments in TYMIDP.
7. 2. In all modules but in particular in dissertation (TYMIDD) and core module (TYMIDC).

Assessment

1-7 are all assessed through practical design projects, professional assignments and the dissertation (TYMIDP, TYMIDC, TYMIDD).

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 he/she 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 the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.