FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOOL OF
VISUAL &
PERFORMING
ARTS

DOCUMENT CONTROL & APPROVAL

Issue	Amendment Detail	Name	Date Approved
0.1	Templates added to submission library	QAE	
	Academic Director Approval and submission to QAE.		
1.0	QAE Approval		

COURSE DESCRIPTOR

The Course Descriptor provides essential information to students, staff teams and others on a particular course or a group of courses in a programme and is designed to meet the University's expectations and those of external bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in respect of programme specifications.

Please refer to guidance notes on completing Course Descriptors before completing the details below.

SECTION 1 - General Course Information

Qualification (course type)	Undergraduate
Course Title	BA (Hons) Visual Communication
Intermediate Qualification(s)	DipHe, CertHE, BA, BA (Hons)
Awarding Institution	Falmouth University
Location of Delivery (e.g. Falmouth, London, Detroit)	Cambridge School of Visual & Performing Arts
Duration of Course	3 years
Course Credits	360
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body accreditation	None
Accreditation Renewal Date (Month and Year)	
UCAS Course Code	
Relevant External Benchmarking	Subject benchmark statement: 'Art & Design' QAA 238 03/08

SECTION 2 – Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Educational Course Aim

Today's creative image-maker has the opportunity to move into uncharted territory as the traditional boundaries of the graphic designer, illustrator, and artist increasingly overlap. Our BA Visual Communication degree offers students the possibility to explore the intersection where illustration, design, and creative practice meet, to define and produce visual outcomes for contemporary and emerging communication environments. We approach creativity as an expanding and hybrid practice, structured around analogue processes for digital outcomes, where a student will gain a solid grounding in the principles of communication, encouraging them to test and stretch their boundaries, whilst developing an individual creative potential as a basis for a lifetime of learning and professional practice. We aim to support, develop, and encourage every student to achieve their full potential in a friendly, busy working environment tailoring the support and advice to personal needs.

Course Specific Employability Skills

This course is designed to prepare students for employment in the design industries and embeds employability skills throughout the three years of the programme. These skills aim to provide students with a structure to support them as they progress through the course, developing the attributes and skills they will need to enjoy a successful career after university.

In addition to the specific skills required of the discipline, CSVPA also embeds a number of fundamental life skills (expressed as graduate attributes) throughout the course. These include:

- Through the opportunity to put into practice the things they learn in a number of ways, both inside and outside of the studio, the course will enable to students to be **open**, **proactive** and **resilient** in their approach to their design solutions.
- Through the opportunity to communicate their ideas and stories both visually and verbally and to become comfortable receiving and giving feedback, students will develop the ability to **communicate**, be **passionate** and **collaborative**.
- By teaching students to navigate change and survive in a professional setting, and in a world of uncertainty, they will become **reliable**, **observant** and **adaptive**.

During the early stages of the programme, projects, workshops and lectures will focus on fundamental observational skills and creative thinking qualities, enabling visual communication solutions and evolving a personal visual language. As students progress, they will identify areas of personal development as assignments employ an exploratory approach to making work, offering the opportunity to extend their learning, explore working practices and examine key concepts in increasingly complex contexts. In the latter stages of the course, self-initiated assignments will explore issues that reflect today's creative practice in terms of professional, commercial, ethical, sustainable and contextual influences that surround it.

These skills are embedded within the projects, workshops and seminars students will encounter during their time on the course, building year on year to enable them to develop a personal vision and skillset that will support their ambitions and future direction. This ensures they are best prepared to enter the workplace or continue to postgraduate study and these skills will support them on their journey.

Subject specific skills within the course will enable students to:

- Understand and use the stages of the design process in response to a brief
- Use experimental, speculative and iterative approaches to design constraints
- Use design, visualisation and writing techniques in the creation of design solutions
- Employ problem-identification and idea generation methodologies
- Engage design skills in image and text manipulation, layout, colour, line, tone, scale and texture
- Be confident in their selection and application of medium
- Be flexible in their response to assignments or briefs
- Identify and interpret the needs of an audience in a range of contexts
- Identify the impact of social and ethical considerations when developing visual solutions
- Be confident in their technical skills, both analogue and digital, to deliver an outcome
- Be competent in drawing skills, both observational and for visualisation
- Understand information hierarchy, layout, grid systems and typographic methodologies
- Be confident in their use of visual language, choice, use of media and ability to produce finished solutions
- Be confident in their use of studio and professional practices

- Employ open-minded thinking in the exploration of a range of design solutions
- Understand colour theory and its application
- Be confident in their self-selection and effective use of media in relation to best work
- Employ visual problem solving, creative thinking, independent thinking and reflective approach to practice
- Produce a professional portfolio and/or website suitable for the promotion and presentation of their work
- Knowledge of copyright and intellectual property law.

Generic skills within the course will enable students to:

- Manage and evaluate information from a variety of unfamiliar sources
- Apply and use academic writing formats and referencing skills
- Effectively employ research methodologies using visual, contextual and historical sources
- Deal with uncertainty when engaging with problem solving
- Use project and time management skills to meet deadlines
- Confidently employ collaborative skills in the production of assignment solutions
- Work to a client led brief, identifying the requirements needed and accommodating the views of others
- Write a CV suitable for the discipline
- Use effective communication and presentation skills visually, verbally and in writing
- Work independently, set goals, manage own workloads and meet deadlines
- Be confident in meeting deadlines.

Career/Future Study Opportunities

Approaches to the management of career skills on the award are focused on one of the award's main imperatives: to produce graduates that are employable within the visual communication and creative industries upon graduation. These can include:

- Advertising
- Art Direction
- Animation
- Art Therapy
- Branding/Identity
- Concept Artist
- Design - Information/Book/App/Interactive/Magazine/Packaging/Postproduction/Publishing/Retail
- Exhibition and Museum Design/Curation
- Film and television
- Graphic designer
- Illustration - Freelance/Botanical/Editorial/Fashion/In-House/Medical/Reportage
- Model Maker
- Prop Maker
- Printmaker
- Project Manager
- Publishing
- Retail Advertising
- Self-publishing
- Social media
- Storyboard Artist
- Teaching -primary, secondary, FE and HE
- Typography
- Television and Film
- Virtual reality
- Website designer

There is also the opportunity to continue their studies at:

- Post graduate level within graphic design or related disciplines
- PhD and research degree

Structure of Course Delivery

The study of Visual Communication is a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional subject. Crossing borders between subject areas and professions; its structure is at its heart about narration. The message is given shape and form using creativity to generate influence. This may involve text, typography, and image, put together in a coherent, relevant, and inspiring unity – a form. The interplay between these elements makes the message, which reaches out to an audience with emphasis. Thus everything is communicating. Taught primarily in the early stages through studio based assignments and workshops that explore the ever widening viewpoint of the discipline. Students will typically engage with components of visual communication such as message, text, typography, image, design, interplay and creativity, Workshops may include photography, printmaking, software, and motion graphics where theoretical knowledge is put into practice. The latter stages reflect a more self-directed structure where students will lead and develop areas of work of particular personal interest. The course delivers tuition through a variety of approaches, designed to enable the student to acquire technical skills, whilst developing an ability to problem solve in a creative and effective manner. These approaches are used across the whole structure of the course delivery and are characterised by the following methods:

Studio-based design projects of varying length and complexity linked to workshops (that may include) photography, printmaking, the use of relevant moving image and graphic arts software, across the three levels. Projects maybe individual, group, self-directed or live, depending on the level and personal interest of each student.

Lectures/seminars provided by specialist input allow key issues to be introduced and debated. They promote dialogue to promote a flexible forum in which the linking of theory and practice can be explored.

Small group tutorials occur weekly across all levels and provide a platform for critique, reflection and discourse on assignments undertaken. It is through these sessions that students will examine their progress, whilst engaging with debate on the role of design within a wider context. They also facilitate the development of generic communication skills, building confidence in sharing ideas, verbally and visually, sharing experiences and promoting a collaborative approach to learning.

Individual tutorials occur in each study block intended to create further reflective learning opportunities and provide pastoral support as required. Lectures and seminars are delivered to further contextualise practice, either from theoretical perspectives or furthering professional practice and subject specialism.

Additional to the weekly contact with staff, students are also expected to further their learning through directed study in response to set design or written assignments. Independent study time naturally increases through the award as students begin to determine and pursue their own individual interests within the subject.

Level 4 is by nature a prescribed phase and is designed to offer students the opportunity to engage with the fundamentals of the discipline *(Core Practice),* whilst exploring and experimenting within the breadth of possibilities *(Disruptive Exploration)* available within the world of visual communication. Prescribed briefs, directed workshops, collaborative projects and lectures provide students with the opportunity to apply these creative processes: from critical thinking to practical hands-on skills across different mediums.

Level four modules:

Core Practice: Visual Communication
Disruptive Exploration
Creative Expression: Visual Communication
C&CS Engagement

The **Level 5** phase of the course is a transition from the 'prescribed' to the 'negotiated'. Students have the opportunity to control the direction of their visual language and the potential area of industry that they might wish to engage with. Live projects and/or collaborations are available to provide a broader professional context when delivering creative solutions as students examine the subject in greater depth. As the focus becomes more industry facing *(Professional Voice),* students are able to continue questioning convention, disrupt, risk take and use creative thinking throughout. Progressing forward sees a shift in emphasis towards more professional and external contexts *(Applied process)* where working practice, time management and design processes are examined on a personal level. Students begin to define the subject from their own perspective and begin to shape skills and interests for the final year ahead *(Negotiated Practice).* Briefs, workshops, lectures, presentations and critiques introduce students to the ethics and responsibility of design practice, collaborative practice and methodologies of project management.

Level five modules:

Professional Voice: Visual Communication
C&CS Preparation
Applied Process: Visual Communication
Negotiated Practices

Level 6 requires students to clarify areas of the profession that inspires them whilst at the same time provides the strongest connection with the body of work that is in development. Students will undertake set briefs and self-directed work *(Positioning your Practice)* as they examine in depth specific topics of their choice. This work will be the driving force when reaching out to a wider audience. The briefs, workshops, lectures, presentations and crits enable expansive examination of each students personal direction. The final phase of delivery focuses on personal direction *(Showcase)* by refining the detail and depth of existing projects or working on new initiatives that presents their personal visual identity, as they transition towards the workplace or further study. This is supported by a strong visiting lecturer series, which attracts many of the leading practitioners in the industry.

Level six modules:

Positioning your Practice: Visual Communication
C&CS Dissertation
Showcase: Visual Communication

Course Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy takes a holistic approach to learning; that is to say, success is not purely measured by the quality of a creative outcome. The purpose of assessment is to weigh student progress and achievement against the learning outcomes assigned to each module. Assessments take the form of:

- Electronic portfolio & supporting work
- Presentation
- Essay/Dissertation or Video essay

Formative / Summative assessment

Formative assessment is concerned with progress and development and summative assessment measures achievement and accomplishment. Each module is assessed using the common assessment criteria of the college.

Formative assessment
The intention is to give students the opportunity to reflect on what they have done, what went well and what they would like to improve. This is a 2-way process, not simply about tutor comments, but a shared dialogue. Further review points within the levels support the monitoring of progress and offer formative feedback in the form of group critiques, peer reviews, group and individual tutorials.

Summative assessment
Is the formal marking of all the work, using the learning outcomes, assessment criteria matrix, produced during the year and takes place at the end of each study block where the Assessment Board will discuss and confirm all summative assessment decisions for progression and final classifications.

No.	Learning Outcome Category
1	Enquiry
2	Conceptualisation
3	Experimentation
4	Evaluation

5	Realisation
6	Communication
7	Professionalism
8	Impact

Course Level Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcome	Descriptor	Level 4 / learning outcome	Level 5 / learning outcome	Level 6 / learning outcome
		On completion of a module a student should typically be able to:	*On completion of a module a student should typically be able to:*	*On completion of a module a student should typically be able to:*
01 Enquiry	Demonstrate analysis of relevant written, visual and material research.	Evidence knowledge and understanding of a selected range of contemporary and historical practice and theory in real-world professional contexts.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of contemporary historical practice and theory in real-world professional contexts.	Develop specialist knowledge and understanding of contemporary and historical practice and theory in real world professional contexts.
02 Conceptualisation	Demonstrate idea generation utilising effective research in the development of creative work.	Utilise creative idea generation through research and enquiry into creative practice.	Extend creative idea generation drawing on research, analysis, experimentation and new solutions through creative practice.	Identify opportunities through in-depth investigation, bringing together research, analysis, experimentation and new ideas and/or artefacts through independent creative practice.
03 Experimentation	Demonstrate a process of discovery based on exploration and risk taking.	Advance new ideas and risk-taking that challenges conventional thinking in an emerging creative practice.	Identify and explore a range of possibilities leading to appropriate solutions, informed by experimentation, risk taking and challenging conventions.	Produce and develop a range of possibilities leading to appropriate solutions, informed by in-depth experimentation, risk taking and challenging conventions.
04 Evaluation	Demonstrate critical judgement through review, selection and reflection.	Review and analyse information and begin formulating independent critical judgement.	Apply analytical skills that develop independent critical judgement, incorporating reflection and analysis of divergent information.	Evaluate and demonstrate independent critical judgement in the assessment of complex and divergent information leading to a well-informed and insightful argument.
05 Realisation	Produce outcomes using effective process, materials and methods.	Build competency in the use of selected techniques and processes associated with the production of creative design.	Demonstrate competency in a range of techniques and processes associated with the production of creative design.	Produce a range of sophisticated techniques and processes associated with the production of creative design to a professional standard.
06 Communication	Demonstrate professional communication skills appropriate to the audience.	Utilise effective communication and presentation methods in visual, oral or written form, ensuring they are appropriate for an identified audience.	Extend effective communication and presentation skills in visual, oral or written form, demonstrating sensitivity to audiences and professional contexts.	Devise appropriate modes of professional communication and presentation skills in visual, oral or written form for audiences, demonstrating fluency, reflection and adaptability.
07 Professionalism	Demonstrate time-management collaboration planning and professional behaviour.	Evidence emerging employability skills, including the ability to manage workload, work to deadlines, creatively communicate practice and respond to set briefs both individually and/or collaboratively.	Demonstrate employability skills, including an increasing ability to manage workload, work to deadlines, respond to change, effectively communicate practice and respond to set briefs both individually and/or collaboratively.	Refine employability skills, set and manage workloads, meet project deadlines, respond to change, professionally communicate practice and respond to set briefs both individually and/or collaboratively.
08 Impact	Analyse and reflect on the impact of work within a broader context.	Identify emerging issues and concepts relevant to the field of creative design.	Demonstrate an understanding of the potential impact of creative design within a broader context.	Evaluate and reflect on the potential impact of your practice within a broader context.

Curriculum Structure, Assessment Methods and Learning Outcomes

Module Code	Level	Module Name	Credits	Study Block 1, 2 or 3	Compulsory (C) or Option (O)	Assessment methods*	1 Enquiry	2 Conceptualisation	3 Experimentation	4 Evaluation	5 Realisation	6 Communication	7 Professionalism	8 Impact
	4	Core Practice: Visual Communication	30	1	C	PO	TPA	TPA	TPA	TP	TP	TP	TP	TP
	4	Disruptive Exploration	30	1	C	PO	TPA	TP	TPA	TPA	TP	TP	TP	TP
	4	Creative Expression: Visual Communication	30	2	C	PO	TP	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TP	TP	TPA
	4	C&CS Engagement	30	2	C	ES	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TP	TPA	TP	TP
	5	Professional Voice: Visual Communication	30	1	C	PO	TP	TP	TPA	TPA	TPA	TP	TP	TP
	5	C&CS Preparation	30	1	C	PR ES	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TP	TPA	TP	TP
	5	Applied Process: Visual Communication	30	2	C	PO	TP	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TP	TP	TPA
	5	Negotiated Practice	30	2	C	PO	TP	TPA	TP	TP	TP	TP	TPA	TPA
	6	Positioning your practice: Visual Communication	30	1	C	PO	TP	TP	TPA	TPA	TP	TPA	TP	TPA
	6	C&CS Dissertation	30	1	C	PR DI OT	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TP	TPA	TP	TP
	6	Show Case: Visual Communication	60	2	C	PO	TPA	TPA	TP	TP	TPA	TPA	TPA	TPA

*The following codes for assessment methods apply			
(additional codes can be proposed through this process, if necessary):-			
AR	Artefact	LR	Literature Review
CB	Computer-based	OR	Oral
CE	Critical evaluation	PC	Practical
CS	Case study	PF	Performance
DI	Dissertation or project	PL	Placement
ES	Essay	PO	Portfolio
EX	Exam	PR	Presentation
GR	Group Report	RE	Individual report
IT	In-module Test	SP	Studio Practice
JL	Journal / Logbook	OT	Other