# MA Interaction Design

Programme Specification 2020/21

| Awarding Body | University of the Arts London |
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| **College** | London College of Communication |
| **School** | Design |
| **Programme** | Interaction Design and Visual Communications (L039) |
| **FHEQ Level** | Level 7 Masters |
| **Course Credits** | 180 |
| **Mode** | Full Time |
| **Duration of Course** | 1 year |
| **Valid From** | September 1st 2020 |
| **Course Entry Requirements** | MA Interaction Design has a particular aim to appeal to communication designers who are interested in exploring these new and emerging areas of design practice.<br><br>The course seeks students who have a critical understand of how technologies and digital culture are affecting design practices, and who are keen to work with network digital systems and in areas of design research and practice that challenge preconceptions.<br><br>Although not an entry requirement, you should be comfortable with some basic coding (some i.e. HTML CSS) in order to communicate ideas with colleagues, although strong creative experience in this area is an advantage. We will introduce you to various coding languages and design prototyping platforms during the course, but expect that individuals will develop their skills base within specific project work.<br><br>The course team welcomes applicants from a broad range of backgrounds, from all over the world. MA Interaction Design attracts students who apply direct from an Honours degree course in a field relevant to graphic design, or those with other, equivalent qualifications.<br><br>The course team also welcomes students with relevant experience or those who may have previously worked in industry. |

Educational level may be demonstrated by:

- Honours degree (named above);
- Possession of equivalent qualifications;
- Prior experiential learning, the outcome of which can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required. Your experience is assessed as a learning process and tutors will evaluate that experience for currency, validity, quality and sufficiency;
- Or a combination of formal qualifications and experiential learning which, taken together, can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required.

**APEL (Accreditation of Prior Learning)**

Applicants who do not meet these course entry requirements may still be considered in exceptional cases. The course team will consider each application that demonstrates additional strengths and alternative evidence. This might, for example, be demonstrated by:

- Related academic or work experience
- The quality of the personal statement
- A strong academic or other professional reference
- OR a combination of these factors

Each application will be considered on its own merit but we cannot guarantee an offer in each case.

**Language requirements**

All classes are conducted in English. If English is not your first language, we strongly recommend you let us know your English language test score in your application. If you have booked a test or are awaiting your results, please indicate this in your application. When asked to upload a CV as part of your application, please include any information about your English test score.

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| | - IELTS 6.5 (or equivalent) is required, with a minimum of 5.5 in each of the four skills.<br>- If your first language is not English, you can check you have achieved the correct IELTS level in English on the Language Requirements page.<br><br>For further details regarding international admissions and advice please visit the International Applications page. |
| **Selection Criteria** | Offers will be made based on the following selection criteria, which applicants are expected to demonstrate:<br><br>- Sufficient prior knowledge and experience of and/or potential in a specialist subject area to be able to successfully complete the programme of study and have an academic or professional background in a relevant subject.<br>- Also to show a willingness to work as a team player, good language skills in reading, writing and speaking, the ability to work independently and be self-motivated.<br>- Critical knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject area and capacity for research-led design, intellectual inquiry and reflective thought through: contextual awareness (professional, cultural, social, historical); evidence of research, analysis, development and evaluation (from previous academic study and employment) and a grounded understanding of the world of sonic, visual and networked culture and the ability to engage in and contribute to critical discussion.<br>- In the project proposal a description of the area of interest, field of study and the particular focus of their intended project. This should include an overview of how you intend to go about producing the project and the methodology.<br>- Portfolio should be conceptual and research based, you must show your thinking and making process and a curious nature to explore, test and experiment.<br>- A willingness to work in the physical realm with networked digital systems and in areas of design |

| | research and practice that challenges preconceptions.<br>• A willingness to work with networked digital systems and an awareness of how they shape the varied contexts of human behaviour. |
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| **Scheduled Learning and Teaching** | During your course you will engage with learning and teaching that includes both online and face-to-face modes. The advertised scheduled activity for the course will be delivered through a combination of live, synchronous and asynchronous on-line learning. This is often described as blended learning.<br><br>Definitions of our learning and teaching modes can be found [here](#). |

# Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

## Year 1

| Percentage of Scheduled Learning | 14 |
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| **Awards** | **Credits** |
| Postgraduate Certificate (Exit Only) | 60 |
| Postgraduate Diploma (Exit Only) | 120 |

# Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

| Aim/Outcome | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Aim | Provide you with the opportunity to develop as a professional practitioner within the expanded field of Interaction Design Communication. |
| Aim | Provide you with an understanding of industry in order you understand the specialised industrial context of practice in this field. |
| Aim | Develop your ability to employ rigour and criticality in the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of Interaction Design Communication theory and practice, through the completion of a major project. |
| Aim | Enable you to solve problems with self-direction and originality, and to act independently in planning and implementing Interaction Design Communication projects. |
| Aim | Provide you with the opportunity to produce speculative design solutions that use critical ideas to propose areas of innovative design practice. |
| Aim | Provide you with the opportunity to develop your specialism within the expanded field of Interaction Design Communication. |
| Aim | Enable you to prototype digital and analogue design artefacts using processes widely used in industry and practice. |
| Aim | Enable you to communicate complex ideas from critical and user centred perspectives to advocate a particular direction. |
| Aim | Enable you to ask critical questions of established systems and processes and products. |
| Aim | Develop your ability to work collaboratively and express complex ideas to diverse audiences. |
| Outcome | Produce innovative project work within the expanded field of Interaction Design Communication across the physical and digital domains. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Realisation, Communication) |
| Outcome | Demonstrate an understanding of the expanded field of Interaction Design Communication through advanced practice. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Realisation, Communication) |

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| Outcome | Use relevant digital and analogue design prototyping platforms and processes to realise projects. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Realisation) |
| Outcome | Understand and use a range of software and media tools to communicate complex ideas. (Enquiry, Process, Realisation) |
| Outcome | Demonstrate an understanding of critical ideas that frame experimental practice – through practice and written reflection. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process) |
| Outcome | Present complex ideas to diverse audiences. (Process, Realisation) |
| Outcome | Demonstrate an understanding of the value of Interaction Design Communication methodologies in framing design questions and proposing design solutions. (Knowledge, Communication, Process) |
| Outcome | Articulate user perspectives within complex design processes. (Enquiry, Knowledge) |
| Outcome | Work collaboratively to achieve research and design goals. (Process) |

| | Distinctive Features |
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| 1 | The Expanded Field of Interaction, Design and Communication: The subject mix of interaction design, speculative design, critical design and communication design is a distinctive feature of the course that enables students to work across these three domains in a highly fluid way that is representative of contemporary design and media practice. This builds on LCC's position as a leader in the development of communication design as a discipline and represents an opportunity to study and expanded field of interaction, design and communication. |
| 2 | Applied Critical Thought: The integrated approach of the course to critical thinking provides you with the opportunity to work with critical ideas in an applied design context – for example psycho-geographic practice as empirical research or engaging with other critical theories of space to generate user perspectives – this ensures that ideation processes take on both the macro as well as micro opportunities for innovation and speculation crucial to building a portfolio of highly engaged work. |
| 3 | Design Prototyping (making): The course introduces you to prototyping methodology through a range of innovative and contemporary processes and platforms. These allow you to feedback understanding quickly into a highly iterative design process. This enables you to understand issues of scope, function and outcome from multiple perspectives. |
| 4 | Portfolio Building: The practice-based nature of the course is derived from the understanding that the primary tool for successful graduate progression in this field is the portfolio of work. You will build a strong portfolio of critically agile work over the course that will enable them to progress to their chosen destinations. These projects may manifest themselves in the portfolio as outcomes such as installations, films, web projects, apps or other design artefacts or prototypes. |
| 5 | Low Tech / High Tech: You will connect past and future, physical and digital, learn how to use a real world approach with computing and computational thinking in the real world. This innovative and experimental approach is driven by course staff who founded the cross institutional LT/HT community of practice. Members are involved in exploring practice with technologies involving textile, sound, light, electronics and programming and finding commonalities in practice and engaging in new processes where they combine both Low Tech / High Tech approaches. This community provides opportunities for you to engage with related practice across UAL colleges with other members specifically at CSM and CCW. |
| 6 | Collaboration in Research and Practice: The course requires that you work in groups to explore critical ideas and produce design outcomes collaboratively. This is particularly true in the first term of the course and is crucial in building your |

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| | ability to work in multi-skilled teams. You will also be expected to keep a weblog of your research and practice to ensure that your peers can develop a broader understanding of the practice of the group and so you take responsibility for your ideas in the social context of digital culture. |
| 7 | Course Staff: You will work with highly qualified and experienced educators and practitioners in design who deliver the course and who retain close involvement with the industry, continuing their professional practice and, engaging in scholarly research at an international level. In addition, there will be a programme of visiting experts from industry and academia. |
| 8 | Self Direction: One of the differences you will experience between working at postgraduate level and working at undergraduate level is that you are expected to timetable and manage your own learning to a much greater extent at postgraduate level. Your success or failure on the course will depend to a great extent on how rigorously and responsibly you take this self-direction and how well you respond to tutorial advice. The level of self-management required of you will increase throughout the course. |
| 9 | UAL & LCC: The University of the Arts London and the London College of Communication maintains strong industry links and delivers a world-class environment within which to study Interaction Design Communication. You can access resources ranging from our Stanley Kubrick archive or our industry standard production resources in addition to the largest specialist library within the university. The Design School currently has links with the BBC, Sennep, All of Us, IDEO the V&A, Creative Review, Gamesys, Channel 4, Eye Magazine, Imperial War Museum, Tate, Bloomberg, Pentagram, Samsung and is the host of London's first Maker Faire. It is this environment within the Design School at LCC that distinguishes the course and ensures that you will benefit from this long established network and move with confidence into your chosen field. |

**Course Detail**

MA Interaction Design provides an opportunity for experimental practice in an area of design that increasingly explores the intersection of digital and networked technologies with the world.

## What to expect?

This course immerses you in critical, speculative, and experimental practice to engage and provoke audiences with contemporary issues around topics such as new technologies, ecological concerns, politics - and how these all impact social world.

You will develop your skills and thinking through new combinations of research and practice to develop responsive, evocative, and complex design projects.

We define interaction design as the practice of making objects, spaces, and experiences that instigate new relations with humans, environments, and the systems that revolve around them – and through this, finding new ways to provoke imagination, discussion, and critique.

Through the course, you will develop practical skills in interaction design, design prototyping and physical computing, alongside research skills in human and post-human centred design, forecasting/futures, and critical and speculative design, combining these methodologies and ideas into new and unique forms of practice.

The course's integrated approach to critical thinking provides you with the opportunity to work with critical ideas in an applied design context (such as the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on human relationships), ensuring that designers take on both macro and micro opportunities for innovation, speculation and creativity crucial to building a portfolio of highly engaged work.

## Work experience and opportunities

As well as placing you in a position to work across the broad spectrum of interaction and design, the course is interested in practice-based research, using the work of design as a way of questioning the world around us. This means that the course also prepares you for progression to further design research at MPhil/PhD level as well as to advanced self-directed experimental practice in fields of arts and design.

LCC has an outstanding team of practitioners and published researchers and enjoys a rich programme of visiting speakers. The course also benefits from cross-European collaboration with design industry professionals and higher education institutions.

This course is taught within the [Design School](#).

## Mode of study

MA Interaction Design is in Full Time mode which runs for 45 weeks over 15 months. You will be expected to commit 40 hours per week to study.

### Course Units

In 2019 UAL declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to 'make sustainability a required part of the student learning experience'. In response to the climate and ecological crisis the Design School set in place an ambitious Sustainability Action Plan to fully embed responsible practices within the curriculum and in everything we do. As part of this initiative we have updated our course handbooks against a set of social and environmental sustainability principles to ensure that learning outcomes reflect the urgent need to equip students with the understanding, skills and values to foster a more sustainable planet. Our aim is to change the way students think and to empower them to work towards a sustainable future.

Each course is divided into units, which are credit-rated. The minimum unit size is 20 credits. The MA course structure involves six units, totalling 180 credits.

## Autumn, Term 1

**Theories and Technologies of Interaction Design (40 credits)**
**Research Practice and Design Methodologies (20 credits)**

Term 1 of the course introduces you to the technologies and concepts that are core to the practice and theory of interaction design.

Following an induction programme that sets the scene for the course, you will see how contemporary interaction and design practice uses a range of technologies and concepts, and you will experience the interrelationship between theory and practice.

This phase allows you to acquire the important foundations of knowledge in design and interaction. These are critical for the development of subsequent stages of the course.

You will be introduced to key design prototyping and technical skills in this phase that will be essential for your practice throughout the rest of the course.

## Spring, Term 2

**Experimental Methods (20 credits)**
**Expanded Practice (20 credits)**
**Collaborative Unit (20 credits)**

Term 2 offers you the opportunity to engage further with your critical practice to produce speculative and critical design projects.

In the previous year, students have been given the choice to either explore the deeper relationships between humans and machines, or engage with communities to research their ideas through ethnographical research and radical design.

## Summer, Term 3

**Experimental Methods (continued)**
**Expanded Practice (continued)**
**Final Major Research Project**
**(Weighted 50% written component and 50% practical component)**

Term 3 offers you the opportunity to use both the critical and technical skills gained in Term One to produce speculative and critical design projects.

You will be introduced to the applied skills needed to work with physical computing, sensors and data environments. During this unit you will also develop a project proposal for your final major project and thesis in Term Four.

You will undertake a final major research project which relates to the expanded field of design and interaction. This will involve a self-directed major practical project and the completion of a related thesis, which demonstrates your critical reflection, analysis and original research.

## Autumn, Term 4

**Final Major Research Project (continued)**

With access to broad theoretical models spanning the discipline, you will apply these models to your own specialist area of interest to produce a critically aware major project that after assessment will usually be presented at your postgraduate show.

**Examples of Final Major Projects**

- Adversarial families: agonism, politics and Sunday dinners – Damià Bonafont
- How will the 'Filter Bubble' challenge the Future of 'Smart Home'? – Yang Zhang
- Exploring consciousness in IoT through feminism in China as a case study – Jiaqian Liu
- Increasing ecological understanding with Extended Realities – Clara Koscielniak

- Aspirational algorithms: neutralising gender biases in algorithmic culture – Beatriz Lacerda

If you are unable to continue or decide to exit the course, there are two possible exit awards. A Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded on successful completion of the first 60 credits and a Postgraduate Diploma will be awarded on successful completion of the first 120 credits.

## Learning and Teaching Methods

- Lectures/large group learning
- Workshop and seminar learning
- Academic tutorials
- Self-directed learning
- Outside speakers and visits
- Assessed assignments

## Assessment Methods

- Practical project work and computer based activities
- Prepared writing i.e. academic reports, essays etc.
- Responses to case studies
- Oral presentations
- Personal presentations of prepared work
- Simulations and role plays
- Workshop based activities
- Written research projects
- The creation of a portfolio of work

## Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:


• The College Assessment Strategy
• The UAL and College approach to Personal and Professional Development
• Feedback from current employers in the interaction design industry
• The Learning and Teaching policies of the University of the Arts London
• University of the Arts London Level Descriptors
• Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
• Art and Design subject benchmark statement
• Feedback from current students
• Consultation with staff team

# Course Diagram

| Level 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Week | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | | | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 |

**Unit**

- Unit 1.1: Theories and Technologies of Interaction Design (40 Credits) — S
- Unit 1.2: Research Practice and Design Methodologies (20 Credits) — S
- Unit 2.1: Experimental Design (20 Credits) — S
- Unit 2.2: Expanded Practice (20 Credits) — S
- Unit 2.3: Collaborative Unit (20 Credits) — S
- Unit 4.1: Final Major Project (60 Credits)
- PG Summer Break
- Freshers Week
- PG Overlap Period with new year intake
- Unit 4.1: Final Major Project continued — S

*The University will use all reasonable endeavours to provide the Course and the services described in this Output. There may be occasions whereby the University needs to add, remove or alter content in relation to your Course as may be appropriate for example the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, or in response to student feedback, or to comply with applicable law or due to circumstances beyond its control. The University aim to inform you of any changes as soon as is reasonably practicable.*