MA Interaction Design

Programme Specification 2021/22

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London
College	London College of Communication
School	University of the Arts London
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 2021
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. 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. 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. 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.

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.

- IELTS 6.5 (or equivalent) is required, with a minimum of 5.5 in each of the four skills.
- If your first language is not English, you can check you have achieved the correct IELTS level in English on the [Language Requirements page.](#)

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Portfolio should be conceptual and research based, you must show your thinking and making process and a curious nature to explore, test and experiment. |

	• A willingness to work in the physical realm with networked digital systems and in areas of design research and practice that challenges preconceptions. • A willingness to work with networked digital systems and an awareness of how they shape the varied contexts of human behaviour.
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. Definitions of our learning and teaching modes can be found [here]().

Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

Year 1

Percentage of Scheduled Learning	22
Awards	**Credits**
Postgraduate Certificate (Exit Only)	60
Postgraduate Diploma (Exit Only)	120
Master of Arts	180

Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

Aim/Outcome	Description
Aim	Enable you to confidently explore and experiment with new technologies to ask critical questions of established systems, processes and knowledges, and propose responses to them.
Aim	Enable you to explore interaction design as a practice of communicating complex, urgent, and critical ideas to diverse audiences through experimental design practice.
Aim	Provide you with the opportunity to develop as a professional practitioner, with your own research specialisms, distinctive practice, and unique voice within the field of interaction design.
Aim	Enable you to explore the deeper relationship between research and practice while challenging the established canons and narratives of interaction design, and to advance the field through your unique and progressive contributions to it.
Aim	Develop your ability to explore interdisciplinary practices and ideas from a range of fields to create new and exciting forms of interaction design.
Outcome	Demonstrate a creative and critical understanding of interaction design practice and research. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Realisation, Communication)
Outcome	Produce innovative project work that shows an individualised voice and critical perspective through experimental practice with new technologies. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Realisation, Communication)
Outcome	Demonstrate a focus upon social, political, and ecological responsibility in your design process and outcomes. (Process, Realisation)
Outcome	Demonstrate an understanding of critical ideas that frame experimental practice, through practice and written reflection. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Process)
Outcome	Understand and respond to audience perspectives and needs within interaction design projects. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Communication)

	Distinctive Features
1	Expanding the Field of Interaction Design: The critical and creative approach to interaction design, and the drive to progress and expand it, is a distinctive feature of this course. We encourage our students to draw upon ideas and practices from outside of the usual canon of design study in combination with a deep investigation into the nature of interaction to create critical interaction designs that progress the field. This synchronises with the critical and creative emphasis of the Design School Manifesto and Supra Systems Studio to cultivate a distinctive form of critical design practice at LCC.
2	New Practices, New Ideas: This course specialises in the use of new technologies in interaction design practice, such as AI and machine learning, computer vision, Big Data, and more. Beyond simply making 'tech demos' of new tools, you will use the technologies themselves to critique and explore their function and the ecologies, communities, and individuals they impact.
3	Interdisciplinary Explorations: You will connect past and future, physical and digital, to explore a highly interdisciplinary approach to interaction design. We encourage experimenting with new technologies in a range of traditional forms of practice including installation art, performance, poetry, film-making and more.
4	Developing Your Voice: This course explicitly invites you to find your own voice and identity as a practitioner and researcher, and to pursue topics that you feel are urgent, crucial, and personally relevant. Previous students have explored topics such as new technological modes of climate activism, the preservation of indigenous cultural practices, the politics of digital mass-surveillance, and the uniquely personal anxieties of social media use.
5	Research with & into Practice: In place of the traditional 'iterative' model of design practice, our students are encouraged to see research and practice as a continuous dialogue, where neither truly ends in any design process. This means that throughout the course you will always be both making and thinking.

Course Detail

MA Interaction Design provides an opportunity for experimental and interdisciplinary 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, creative, and experimental practice. Using new technologies, you'll engage and provoke audiences through contemporary issues such as digital privacy, the Climate Crisis, and social and economic inequality.
- On this course, we define interaction design as the practice of making objects, spaces, and experiences that instigate new relations with humans, environments, and the systems revolving around them. Through this, we find new ways to provoke imagination, discussion, and critique.
- Our integrated approach to critical thinking will enable you to work with critical ideas in an applied design context while encouraging you to develop your own voice as a critical practitioner.
- You'll develop practical skills in interaction design, physical computing, creative coding, and other new and traditional media forms. You'll also build research skills in areas such as critical design, post-human centred design, feminist and decolonial theory, speculative design, and critical data studies. You'll combine these methodologies and ideas into new and unique forms of practice.

Work experience and opportunities

The course places you in a position to work across the broad spectrum of interaction and design, with transferable skills in creativity, complexity, criticality, strategic thinking, and technical understanding.

When you graduate, you'll be prepared to work independently or as part of a studio/company in a range of roles such as international digital artist or designer, creative technologist, or researcher in a range of fields.

You'll learn skills for conducting rigorous, practice-based research. You'll use design to question the world around you, which means that you'll also be prepared for further design research at PhD-level internationally.

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](#). In response, LCC's [Design School](#) set an ambitious Sustainability Action Plan in place to fully embed responsible practices within the curriculum and in everything we do.

As part of this initiative, we've shaped our courses around social and environmental sustainability principles that ensure learning outcomes reflect the urgent need to equip you with the understanding, skills, and values to foster a more sustainable planet. Our aim is to change the way our students think, and to empower you 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 5 units, totalling 180 credits.

Autumn, Term 1

Term 1 of the course introduces you to the theories and concepts that are core to the course's research-led and critical form of Interaction Design.

Theories and Practices of Interaction Design (40 credits)

You'll participate in a seminar series that will introduce you to both historical and contemporary theories and approaches drawn from the world of art and design, giving you a profound understanding of the research context for the course. Alongside this, you'll produce individual and group practice projects in a brief that engages with the deepest complexities of the modern technological landscape.

Through these activities, you'll gain an important foundation of knowledge in critical design, exploratory research, and interaction, which are crucial for your development throughout the course. To assist you in your work and to broaden the horizons of your practice, you 'll take introductory workshops in key technical skills such as physical computing and creative coding, alongside specialist approaches such as sonic improvisational practice and augmented reality (AR).

Spring, Term 2

Term 2 offers you the opportunity to engage further with your critical practice to produce research-led and experimental interaction design projects.

Collaborative Unit (20 credits)

You'll complete a group studio project in response to a brief from an external partner. Previous partnerships have been with organisations such as the V&A, the Design Museum, and BBC Research and Development.

Explorative Research (20 credits)

This unit will give you the option to choose between 2 distinct electives to pursue your own thematic research path in the field of interaction design.

As part of your ongoing exploration into the relationship between research and practice, you'll produce a piece of screen-based media that reflects your elective research. This could take the form of a short film, interactive website, or video game.

Summer, Term 3

Term 3 offers you the opportunity to use both the critical and technical skills gained in Term 1, alongside the research and development skills you developed in Term 2, to produce a new work of interaction design that is creatively and technically ambitious, and underpinned by in-depth critical research.

Expanded Practice (40 credits)

You'll undertake further skills development in physical computing and creative coding, alongside specialist workshops in narrative world-building and creative writing.

Final Major Project (60 credits)

(Weighted 50% research component and 50% practical component)

Beginning this term, you will undertake a Final Major Project which relates to the expanded field of design and interaction. At the end of this term, you'll turn your focus to the research video aspect of your Final Major Project, with one-to-one support for developing your own research domain and specialism for your work.

Autumn, Term 4

Final Major Project (continued)

With access to broad theoretical models and practical skills spanning multiple disciplines, you will apply these models to your own specialist area of interest to produce a critically aware major project.

Examples of Final Major Projects

The following are available to view on the UAL site:
https://www.arts.ac.uk/subjects/animation-interactive-film-and-sound/postgraduate/ma-interaction-design-lcc

- Chronic Suicider (Mich Tsai) – A robotic prosthesis and performance tool for exploring embodied relations to machines and pain.
- Yo-Plotter (Anya Wang) – An installation that explores the evolving public perception of 'AI as author' and its intersections with the history of art.
- Alt-Ctrl (Michael Sedbon) – A bio-art device that proposes new domains for the relationship between machine cognition and the natural world.

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

Assessment Methods

- Practical project work
- Prepared writing i.e. academic reports, essays etc.
- Responses to case studies
- Oral presentations
- Personal presentations of prepared work
- 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		

| 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 | 46 | 47 |

Unit (rows, Start of Undergraduate Year)

- Theories and Practices of Interaction Design (40 credits) — weeks 2–10, **S** at week 11
- Explorative Research (20 credits) — weeks 11–19, **S** at week 20; Explorative Research cont. — weeks 21–30, **S** at week 31
- Collaborative Unit (20 credits) — weeks 11–19, **S** at week 20
- Expanded Practice (40 credits) — weeks 21–30, **S** at week 31
- PG Overlap Period with new year intake
- Final Major Project (60 credits) — weeks 31–36; Final major Project cont. — **S**

PG Summer Break (week 37)

Start of Undergraduate Year

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