

BA (Hons) Visual Communication Course Specification



1. General information

Course Title	BA (Hons) Visual Communication
UCAS code	W211
Awarding Institution	Leeds Arts University
Institution at which course is delivered	Leeds Arts University
Professional Accreditation (if applicable)	N/A
Relevant QAA Benchmark(s)	Art & Design 2017
Date of most recent review/approval (for new courses)	March 2018
Date of next review	2023-24

Awards	Credits	Duration	Mode of study
BA (Hons) Visual Communication	360 (180 ECTS)	3 years	FT
BA Visual Communication*	300 (150 ECTS)	3 years	FT
DipHE in Visual Communication*	240 (120 ECTS)	2 years	FT
CertHE in Visual Communication*	120 (60 ECTS)	1 year	FT
*Exit award only			

2. Course Aims

The BA (Hons) Visual Communications course offers a truly multidisciplinary environment underpinned by design methods. Students on the course create work which both, reflects their own interests, and responds to the requirements of the contemporary creative industries. We provide an opportunity to develop a personal and professional understanding of visual communication within a range of contexts including: studio-based practice, live projects, collaborative learning and work-related learning. Through a carefully structured three-year process, students will learn to become autonomous practitioners capable of applying intellectual and practical skills in a chosen area of visual communication or further study.

Learning and teaching is based on design problem-solving methods, which draws upon the academic and industry experience of the staff team. Delivery methods are structured to facilitate the development of core practical and theoretical design principals, and media specific technical skills. This pedagogy utilises paradigms and terminology from film, television, graphic design, photography, illustration and event design.

The course mirrors much of contemporary industry, where illustrators, videographers, graphic designers, photographers, spatial designers etc. work alongside one another, in multidisciplinary teams, and learn from each other's methods and approaches. Students graduate with a well-developed ability to work with others in creative and collaborative contexts. The course has a commitment to preparing students for the requirements of the creative industries where graduates are employed in range of ways including salaried positions, freelance working and portfolio careers.

This course aims to provide you with:

- A multidisciplinary course of study which enables you to visually communicate employing a range of technical skills and design disciplines
- A high quality and challenging multidisciplinary design education in a stimulating and appropriately resourced environment
- An academically rigorous honours level experience that engages with industry practices and discourses suitable to contemporary creative industries
- An opportunity to apply your skills and understanding of visual communication in meaningful and purposeful ways
- Opportunities to develop your personal and professional understanding of Visual Communication within contexts including: live projects, collaborations, placements and work-related learning
- The ability to apply theoretical and practical skills in your chosen area of communication practice
- The ability to custom design your creative skillset for sustained employment responsive to emerging design issues and trends

On successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

- Respond to complex and challenging creative briefs using your own individual design methods and approaches
- Communicate effectively within a professional context
- Practice self-identified media skills to a professional standard
- Engage in critical debates around contemporary design issues
- Conduct design research in an effective and useful manner appropriate to your chosen field within the creative industries
- Communicate effectively through visual, verbal and written means

3. Distinctive Features

Distinctive features of the course:

- Multidisciplinary course of study embracing a range of visual communication approaches, methods and genres
- A broad-based approach to design which includes graphic design, photography, moving image and illustration (in both two and three dimensions)
- A learning environment that supports the development of deep and autonomous learning
- Introduces you to the application of visual communication in meaningful ways, with a focus on working with clients, collaborators and audiences
- A consistent emphasis on real, external projects and work-related learning throughout all three levels of the course
- Creates opportunities to collaborate with peers, external groups, and/or establish enterprise projects
- Integration of history, ideas and practices in design, into creative projects of your own devising, whilst encouraging you to contextualise your practice and engage with wider critical debates
- Offers a course of study that encourages and supports questioning, experimentation and innovation

4. Course Structure

4a. Module Framework

Level 4	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUVC401 Visual Exploration	60	30	600
LAUVC402 Send & Receive	40	20	400
LAUVC403 Professional Contexts 1	20	10	200
Level 5	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUVC501 Visual Literacy	60	30	600
LAUVC502 Professional Contexts 2	60	30	600
Level 6	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUVC601 Negotiated Practice	60	30	600
LAUVC602 Communication Practice	60	30	600

4b. Course Map / Structure

Level 4		
Semester One	Visual Exploration (LAUVC401) <i>60 credits</i>	
Semester Two	Send & Receive (LAUVC402) <i>40 credits</i>	Professional Contexts (LAUVC403) <i>20 credits</i>
120 credits (60 ECTS credits)		Certificate of Higher Education (Exit Award)

Level 5		
Semester One	Visual Literacy (LAUVC501) <i>60 credits</i>	
Semester Two	Professional Contexts 2 (LAUVC502) <i>60 credits</i>	
120 credits (60 ECTS credits)		Diploma of Higher Education (Exit Award)

Level 6		
Semester One	Negotiated Practice (LAU601) <i>60 credits</i>	
Semester Two	Communication Practice (LAU602) <i>60 credits</i>	
120 credits (60 ECTS credits)		BA (Hons) Visual Communication (Exit Award)
*Students who fail to complete 360 credits but have accumulated no fewer than 300 credits will be awarded an Ordinary degree.		

5. Course Learning Outcomes

Learning is assessed at each level of the course. This develops from introductory work at level 4, through development of skills and ideas at level 5, progressing to application and synthesis at level 6 in line with the FHEQ qualification descriptors.

Course Level Outcomes (CLOs) define what you are expected to be able to do on completion of each level. These values are defined as 'expectations' within each module.

Level 4

Acquisition of fundamental practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Level Learning Outcomes
<i>By the end of Level 4, you will be expected to:</i>
Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the relationship between the theoretical and practical contexts of visual communication.
Demonstrate an ability to problem solve, generate informed ideas and evaluate their appropriateness for communication issues.
Evidence an applied familiarity of visual communication materials, tools, techniques and processes to produce work that responds to communication issues and needs.
Demonstrate appropriate communication and self-management skills to enable independent learning.
Demonstrate an understanding of the professional and contextual location of creative practice.

Level 5

Acquisition of higher level practical skills, research, reflective and knowledge abilities, professional practice and project management skills.

Level Learning Outcomes
<i>By the end of Level 5, you will be expected to:</i>
Demonstrate a critical awareness and applied understanding of the relationship between the theoretical and practical contexts of your own creative concerns.
Demonstrate an ability to generate informed ideas, concepts, proposals, solutions and/or arguments, and apply using the language, materials, processes and techniques of a designated discipline.
Evidence an appropriate application of materials, tools, techniques and processes to produce work that responds to critically informed communication issues and needs.
Demonstrate an understanding of the professional and contextual location of your practice, and the communication and self-management skills required to enable independent learning within this context.

Level 6

Becoming an autonomous, independent learner devising, engaging and presenting your own self-determined visual communication design project supported by relevant forms which demonstrate your critical and analytical approaches. These may include written transcript, context report, sketchbooks, journals, visual and/or aural evidence of testable processes.

Level Learning Outcomes
<i>By the end of Level 6, you will be expected to:</i>
Demonstrate an independent critical understanding, specific knowledge and specialist understanding of the professional and contextual location of your practice.
Evidence the synthesis of your knowledge and understanding to generate effective creative solutions within visual communication in order to progress into employment or other progression opportunities.
Evidence a high level of process and professional skills that demonstrate a critically informed application of the materials and professional skills relevant to your own design approach to visual communication.
Use information, experiences and a range of appropriate communication methods to present yourself as a professional practitioner.

6. Module Expectations

Module Expectations are expressed within the course modules as ‘what you are expected to do’. Module Expectations are defined in subject-relevant language and aligned with the Dearing Report recommendations (1997) commonly used in the UK HE sector, normally articulated in terms of:

- knowledge and understanding (KU)
- intellectual or cognitive skills (IC)
- practical and professional skills (P)
- key/transferable skills (T)

To fulfil course level learning outcomes you will be expected to:

Knowledge and Understanding	
KU1	Demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the theoretical and practical contexts in your visual communication practice
KU2	Demonstrate awareness of appropriate areas of visual communication practice within the creative industries and cultural environment.
KU3	Select consider and experimentally apply source material to inform your own creative development.
KU4	Make appropriate use of research to position your practice in relation to the critical, cultural or social context of design communication.

Intellectual or Cognitive Skills	
IC1	Evidence the ability to analyse and evaluate ideas from a range of primary and secondary sources, with a respect for the role and impact of intellectual property.
IC2	Analyse, evaluate and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as a learner.
IC3	Explore different methods of recording information from a range of sources.
IC4	Critically evaluate your creative processes and practice within the context of visual communication and peer group contexts.
Practical and Professional Skills	
P1	Evidence the capacity for undertaking practical and theoretical enquiry that demonstrates an awareness of critical, effective and testable processes.
P2	Demonstrate the ability to problem solve through the application of techniques, processes and practice.
P3	Demonstrate appropriate project time management skills in relationship to conducting practical and theoretical aspects of visual communication practice.
P4	Demonstrate an ability to write, critique and respond to, a design communication brief.
Key Transferable Skills	
T1	Work to deadlines and negotiate realistic goals and schedules.
T2	Organise and carry out self-directed projects and communicate outcomes through written, visual, oral and/or other appropriate forms.
T3	Employ professional presentation skills in order to effectively communicate with others.
T4	Communicate individual opinions in written, visual, oral and/or other appropriate forms.

6a. Module Expectation Mapping

The nature of visual communication predicts that these expectations are present and evident in each module to a greater or lesser extent.

Therefore, these expectations do have relevance in all seven modules of the course, but in some modules will have greater emphasis than others.

Level 4

The following expectations are normally prioritised in level 4 modules as illustrated below:

Study Module/unit	KU1	KU2	KU3	KU4	IC1	IC2	IC3	IC4	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
LAUVC401: Visual Exploration	✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			
LAUVC402: Send & Receive	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		
LAUFA403: Professional Contexts 1		✓				✓					✓				✓	✓

Level 5

The following expectations are normally prioritised in level 5 modules as illustrated below:

Study Module/unit	KU1	KU2	KU3	KU4	IC1	IC2	IC3	IC4	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
LAUVC501: Visual Literacy		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
LAUVC502: Professional Contexts 2	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Level 6

The following expectations are normally prioritised in level 6 modules as illustrated below:

Study Module/unit	KU1	KU2	KU3	KU4	IC1	IC2	IC3	IC4	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
LAUVC601: Negotiated Practice		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
LAUVC602: Communication Practice	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies

7a. Teaching and Learning

Level 4

The first year introduces you to the underlying concepts and principals of Visual Communication, contextualising their relevance to contemporary practice within the creative industries. It also introduces the breadth of practice covered by the course via the fields of: illustration, moving-image, photography and graphic design. You will explore the connections between design theory and practice, learning how to create effective and engaging work in a range of creative industry related contexts.

During the second semester there will be a greater emphasis on developing projects of your own and becoming an autonomous learner. This will be encouraged through the development of your creative projects. Regular taught sessions will provide a stable core framework for you to work in, and independent study will be supported through individual and group tutorials.

You will begin to develop an awareness and understanding of the relationship between your own practice and the contemporary creative industries. Through staged research tasks, you will investigate a specific self-identified aspect of the creative industry in greater depth. You will investigate case studies of industry practices and roles, employability and employment. You will begin to develop key transferable skills and understanding of professional presentation practices. You will begin to develop the skills to be a reflective practitioner, to analyse, evaluate and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as a learner. The module is externally-focussed with a curriculum supported by talks from visiting professionals.

Level 5

During the second year you will identify, and then develop, the focus of your communication practice, and individual design methods. From this you will begin to develop a bespoke design skillset based on the needs of the work you are creating. Teaching will facilitate your individual research into relevant areas of the creative industries and provide strategies for networking. You will identify the media and approaches relevant to your industry position and base your selection of briefs and projects upon these. There will be opportunities to explore a range of collaboration and engagement, both within, and beyond the university. Through an integrated approach to theory and practice you will advance, broaden and promote depth in your learning..

The first semester will provide a core framework of teaching from academic staff and instruction and support from workshop staff. Your learning will be supported by timetabled tasks. Workshops and tutorials will help you identify skills central to your practice. Alongside this you will be supported to develop awareness of learning approaches that are most effective for you, and use these to support your research and skills acquisition. Through this approach your development as an autonomous learner is supported.

During the second semester you will investigate the specific areas of the professional world that relate to your emerging practice, and develop a deepened understanding of the relationship between your own practice and the contemporary creative industries. You will continue to develop skills appropriate to your practice, and apply them to real life-projects (whether self-directed, client-based or competitions). You will develop a portfolio of work to help secure work-related learning experiences such as: assisting professional practitioners; answering client defined briefs; collaborating beyond the course; work-experience. You will learn to pitch your ideas in an industry context and create promotional tools, both digital and physical, which relate to the creative field in which you aim to work.

Level 6

In the third year, you will continue to develop and deepen professional and entrepreneurial skills in an area of practice you identify as relevant to your own individual design methodology. You will undertake a critically-engaged project and facilitate it through external links, exhibitions and conferences. On graduating, you'll be ready to make a positive contribution to your chosen profession and to society, leaving us with a bespoke skill set, a clearly defined design methodology, and a clear strategy for moving on to employment, self-employment or further study.

In the first semester, through negotiation with tutors you will identify a design research question to deepen your critical understanding of your individual practice. You will use primary and secondary research techniques to explore the potential markets and audiences for your practice, and through self-negotiated briefs you will establish working connections with appropriate parts of the creative industries beyond the university. You will extend your ability to communicate and collaborate appropriately with external partners, and to respond effectively to design communication briefs set by them. You will question and critique your bespoke design skillset in response to a changing cultural landscape through one or more research-led projects. This process will be documented in your Design Report. You will develop an awareness of entry-level professional standards within your chosen field of practice and continue developing the technical skills appropriate to entry-level employment within it.

During the first semester you will determine the approaches you are using, through a combination of taught sessions and autonomous learning in preparation for the final semester, where you will take full responsibility for the direction of your practice, whilst still actively supported by academic and workshop staff.

The second semester provides an opportunity to produce a body of work which will function as a showcase for your skills and creative vision. Your work will reflect your individual critical concerns and the requirements of your chosen field of practice. Through negotiation with tutors you will develop a brief which facilitates the research, design and production of visual communication products, which will demonstrate your abilities and potential to future employers, clients and collaborators. You can work alone or in collaboration with other students or practitioners outside the university. Your work can be created to meet the requirements of existing communication formats: publications, film competitions etc. or to present new possibilities and potentials for contemporary visual communication practice. Your bespoke design skillset will provide the foundation upon which all your work is built.

You will develop the capability to work at an entry-level of professional standards within your chosen field. Demonstrating: technical skills; aesthetic understanding; transferable skills of professional practice including the project management of a complex design project.

Throughout the module delivery across all three years you will be encouraged to undertake independent study to supplement and consolidate what is being learnt and taught.

7b. Engagement Strategy

Methods for engaging with teaching and learning will typically include (without being limited to):

BRIEFINGS: To provide key information, approaches and expectations relating to module content, specific briefs, study tasks and assessment requirements.

CRITIQUES: To enable you to relate your work to a growing awareness of the link between theory and practice, and how this supports the evaluative process.

INDEPENDENT STUDY: To support the development of individual and autonomous approaches to research, development and the professional understanding of individual creative concerns, technical skills and module content.

INDIVIDUAL TUTORIALS: To provide an opportunity for individual discussion, formative feedback, workload management and action planning in response to module content, set briefs and study tasks.

PEER REVIEWS: To introduce, develop and support peer led formative feedback, reflective practice and communication skills relating to module content, individual practice and assessment requirements.

LECTURES: To introduce and explore key practices, principles and theories relating to module content, study tasks and the broader concerns of the discipline.

SEMINARS: To introduce, discuss and embed key practices, principles and theories relating to module content, study tasks and the broader concerns of the discipline.

PRACTICAL SESSIONS: To develop practice alongside other students.

WORKSHOPS: To develop technical and creative skills.

Additional / Enhancement Activities

There will be opportunities to engage with additional course-specific and university-wide enhancement activities, events and projects including:

- Visiting professionals programme
- Research visits and trips
- Live projects and external events
- Improving your employability skills
- Collaborative projects

You will also be encouraged to identify and attend individually appropriate opportunities for external development and research activities.

7c. Assessment

The assessment of the modules is holistic. All material presented for assessment is taken as a whole and a single mark is given. Undertaking the staged tasks in the learning & teaching will encourage your acquisition of the skills and attributes expected for your graduate progress. Throughout the course you will articulate your design process through a series of design reports. These will present key aspects of: the critical context of your work; the design methodology utilised; the responses of the audience. In level 4 the report will sit within Send & Receive and align with the development of a self-directed brief. In level 5 the report will form part of Professional Contexts 2 and will facilitate a demonstration of industry appropriate design research and evaluation. At level 6, as part of Negotiated Practice, it will ask you to question and critique your own design methodology and the way you use it within your practice.

The aim of assessment is to inform you of your individual progress as you work through the course. Feedback is an essential element of assessment. You will be provided with written summative feedback on all of your module assessments at the end of each module. You will partake in continuous evaluation within the teaching and learning on the course, developing skills in reflection and dialogue and receive continuous formative feedback from the teaching staff and peers. Both summative and formative feedback approaches are designed to meet the 'assessment for learning' and 'feedforward' values espoused in the UK Quality Code. All modules on this course above 20 credits contain formal formative feedback sessions using the assessment 'fields' where you will receive written feedback on your progress to meet this developmental aim. Assessment also continually ensures that you are meeting the required academic standards for the award.

In visual communication your performance of what you have learnt as a designer, maker, communicator, thinker, researcher and learner is expressed through the work you produce with any investigations, transcripts, research studies and test pieces you undertake in support of this. The Leeds Arts University Assessment strategy regards 'Performance' as the key term for the diverse creative outputs submitted in assessment across our provision. Your creative output / performance will demonstrate the extent to which you have learned, developed, assimilated and mediated your knowledge, understanding and skills into appropriate forms for your submission requirements. You will evidence module expectations expressed as 'what you are expected to learn' in your submission requirements and then your work will be assessed as follows.

Your work will be assessed holistically through five assessment 'fields'. These are:

Fields	Descriptor
Presentation	That which is seen by exhibition, portfolio, transcript, performance, relevant to tasks set.

Process	Evidence of the learning journey through method in haptic, physical practice based and textual applications.
Idea	Thought, concept or aim relevant to task, student centred and with clarity of vision.
Documentation	That which evidences the student's journey in and through research, technical experimentation, and/or creative endeavour. Could include: data; reflection; analysis; planning.
Technical	Quality and/or utility of the technical features employed; demonstration of skill / competence in media relevant to task.

7d. Feedback

BA (Hons) Visual Communication tutors will provide written and/or oral feedback, both in support of your ongoing development, as well as in direct response to student work formally within assessment contexts.

Provision of continuous feedback - defined as information communicated to students with the intention of improving learning - is a significant and distinctive strength of the course. It is particularly manifest within the iterative dialogue which takes place between tutor and student(s) in practical learning contexts.

Feedback is an essential element of assessment. You will be provided with written summative feedback on all of your module assessments at the end of each module. You will partake in continuous evaluation within the teaching and learning on the course, developing skills in reflection and dialogue and receive continuous formative feedback from the teaching staff and peers. Both summative and formative feedback approaches are designed to meet the 'assessment for learning' and 'feedforward' values espoused in the UK Quality Code. All the modules on this course contain formal formative feedback sessions using the assessment 'fields' where you will receive written feedback on your progress to meet this developmental aim.

Formative
<p>You will receive formative feedback on your progress throughout the module in a number of ways. These will include (without being limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Reviews • Group Tutorials • Individual Progress Tutorials
Summative
<p>At the end of the module you will receive summative feedback represented by a grade with tutor comments on your work. This feedback will help you to understand your how you performed on the module, clarify your strengths and identify areas for further consideration.</p>