

A photograph of two students, a young man and a young woman, smiling and looking at a large anatomical drawing on a wall in an art studio. The young man is wearing a red hoodie and the young woman is wearing a green sweater. They are both holding pens, suggesting they are actively engaged in the learning process.

Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for **Art and Design** for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape,

and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); accessibility and the needs of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the subject.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Art and Design?

Art and Design covers broad disciplines with a breadth of creative processes, characterised by a student-centred and practice-based pedagogy. Art and Design courses create environments to explore, comment on and imagine how to understand the world. They foster creative curiosity, visual expression, material knowledge, digital literacy, and critical reflection. They provide opportunities to make interventions and speculations, responding to societal and global opportunities and challenges.

Art and Design practices are characterised by the conception, experimentation, creation, and dissemination of processes and outcomes that shape visual and material culture. To practise Art and Design, students need a broad knowledge base and a strong awareness of historical, social, cultural, and technical contexts, alongside specialised creative and research skills. Art and Design students contribute to, and participate in, social narratives, working flexibly across different areas.

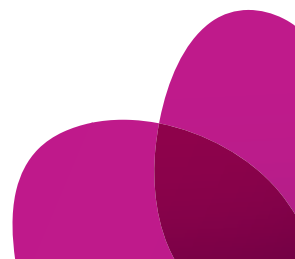
Art and Design practices draw on diverse visual, spatial and sensory languages. Through research, imagination, analysis, synthesis, making, practice, and communication, the study of Art and Design develops creative thinking and innovation. These are translated into meaningful expressions and interactions that contribute to wellbeing and economic transformation, social change, culture-enhancement, and sustainable development.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Art and Design?

The disciplines of Art and Design have a symbiotic relationship with their learning environments. Studios and workshops often shape how students engage with practices and processes. There is an increased recognition of the value of flexible study modes to support students' diverse learning needs. Emerging tools and new workflows have supported this shift, and the distinctive practices of making and creative inquiry that are central to Art and Design are being adapted and sustained within these new contexts.

Live projects, exhibitions, arts residencies, incubators, mentorship schemes, micro-internships and placements offer students valuable professional engagement opportunities and reflect the demands and realities of creative careers. These experiences also help students build networks and develop the ability to work both independently and collaboratively.



Studio-based teaching is focused primarily on enabling students to develop creative abilities, including conceptualisation, visualisation, experimentation and informed risk-taking. These abilities are complemented by technical skills to translate ideas into outcomes, and transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication and teamworking.

The teaching on lecture-based modules is primarily focused on enabling students to widen and deepen their knowledge of the subject, including its historical and theoretical contexts. Project-based learning allows for a diverse range of outcomes, and mirrors professional working practices.



How are students assessed?

Assessment in Art and Design education reflects the value of learning through creative practice. This includes recognising that the process of making can serve as evidence of learning, broadening how knowledge is understood and assessed. This approach can enhance accessibility by enabling students to demonstrate their learning in ways that reflect their individual strengths and communication preferences. A distinctive feature of Art and Design assessment is that it involves assessing both the process and the product. The creative process can be formatively assessed as students develop their work, but it is also often assessed at the end of a project, where it accompanies the final creative output; the student journey is integral to the assessment process.

The wide range of methods and modalities used within Art and Design disciplines supports diverse ways of thinking, communicating and presenting work. This is reflected in curriculum design, as programmes make use of different assessment methods, offering flexible and varied submission formats for formative and summative tasks. Flexible options, such as offering students the choice of submitting live or pre-recorded audio or video presentations, instead of written essays or other text-based outcomes, allow students to document their process, demonstrate critical thinking and evidence research in ways that suit their strengths.

While assessments are designed to be accessible from the outset, additional adjustments can be made to support individual needs and ensure fair participation for all.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold, typical, and excellent standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours and/or Master's degree in **Art and Design** are outlined on **pages 20-23** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on page 24 of the Statement.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector.

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