MSc Design and Digital Media

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Welcome

This document is designed to tell you more about the Design and Digital Media MSc programme at the University of Edinburgh.

Design and Digital Media is an expanding and diverse area. It encompasses design for digital systems (including web design), all design that uses digital tools and techniques, and wider study of the social and commercial contexts that inform and are affected by digital design. Our MSc programme recognises the breadth of these concerns, and offers maximum flexibility for students to mould it to their own interests. An extensive summer project provides a final vehicle for development in depth of a personal response (optionally as a member of a group) to specific issues.

The programme originated in 1999 in Architecture, but was always concerned with much broader design issues. Now the interdisciplinary Edinburgh College of Art, housing the departments of Art, Design, Music, Architecture and History of Art, provides an ideal base for our eclectic mix of interests. The programme enjoys a close relationship with the MScs in Sound Design, Architectural and Urban Design, Digital Composition and Performance, and Acoustics and Music Technology. Together this cohort of staff and students apply a richly diverse and dynamic approach to specialist research in themes of design, composition, musical acoustics, computer science, media and cultural theory.

I hope you enjoy reading the material on the following pages, which discusses the programme in more detail. You can also find out about the course on our website, www.ed.ac.uk/eca/design-digital-media.

Programme outline

The Design and Digital Media programme accepts students from a broad range of backgrounds and makes few assumptions about initial competences. It seeks to encourage curiosity and exploration in the many areas of digital design. It encompasses specific practical exercises and projects in 3D modelling, interactive system design, dynamic web design, and considerations of media installations and performances. It also pursues theoretical and philosophical aspects of design and media culture, as well as in-depth study of entrepreneurship, commercialisation opportunities and business practices in the area of digital media. A strongly studio-based working method maximises opportunities for group work, peer learning and the development of a strong team ethos. Across the two teaching semesters (September to March), students will take six taught courses, three in each semester. Some of these are shared with the related MScs mentioned above.

Semester 1:
Introduction and Orientation
ARCH11002  Media and Culture
ARCH11192  Introduction to Digital Design

Plus, one of the following two options:
ARCH11193  Introduction to Interactive Design
ARCH11173  Introduction to Digital Modelling and Animation in Design

Semester 2:
Practice, Reflection and Action
ARCH11004  Dynamic Web Design
CMSE11164*  Informatics Entrepreneurship & Digital Marketplace (20credits)
ARCH11006*  Digital Media Studio Project

Summer period (Vacation): Integration
ARCH11007  Final Project

*This course is optional and may be replaced by any 20 credit points offered by the University of Edinburgh or the Edinburgh College of Art that meets with the approval of the Programme Director and the Head of Architecture.

Design and Digital Media: the courses in detail

Introduction to Digital Design
This course introduces techniques and concepts used for designing and delivering digital media: the generation, manipulation and layout of artwork, text and other rich media, for prototyping and publishing in the context of current and emerging Internet technologies and platforms, within commercial and arts-based practices. The emphasis is on design. Students advance through a series of lectures, demonstrations, practical project work, exercises and critique.

Introduction to Interactive Design
This course introduces techniques and concepts used for designing and delivering interactive multimedia: developing time-lined and scripted interfaces, interactions and content for multimedia presentation in the context of current and emerging technologies and platforms, within commercial and arts-based practices. The emphasis is on design. Students advance through a series of lectures, demonstrations, practical project work, exercises and critique.
Introduction to Digital Modelling and Animation in Design
This course introduces the techniques that are used in digital design: three dimensional modelling, simple computer animation, image rendering, and the preparation of material suitable for publishing on the World Wide Web. The emphasis is on design. Students advance through a series of lectures, demonstrations, practical project work, exercises and critique in a group context.

Media and Culture
This is an introduction to the issues that surround the emergence of digital design. Seminar and lecture sessions cover topics that enable students to discuss the impact of digital technology from its immediate practical application to the long term redefinition of the design professions. The development of a broad social and psychological understanding of the nature and role of information, metaphor and interface will also form an important component of the course. Key texts by thinkers who have contributed new ideas and generated fresh debate about living and working with digital media will be studied, which will provide the basis for focused discussions about how digital design is developing or could develop. Sessions will therefore be devoted to the major concepts and theoretical approaches which have a bearing on the practice of digital design, canvassing issues such as technological determinism, utopianism, technoromanticism, concepts of language, typology, space and the body. The course will also incorporate lectures on the practical, social, and cultural ramifications of digital media, and integrate the concerns of visual and aural cultures.

Dynamic Web Design
This course introduces the challenges of setting up a commercially-oriented web site, the lessons learnt being applicable to any aspect of digital design practice as a commercial venture. The course is directed particularly to the technical aspects of design for the web; an integrated treatment of social and legal issues involved in the commercial practice of digital design and e-commerce is developed in ARCH11005, The Digital Marketplace. We focus on the topic of web-site design because of its centrality in this context: digital design practices will normally engage in e-commerce whatever their main business. Practical activity will centre around what would be required for the development and commercial exploitation of the system designed, with some emphasis on its usability for the target audience.

Informatics Entrepreneurship & Digital Marketplace
Informatics Entrepreneurship and Digital Marketplace teaches some of the generic and transferable skills required to become an entrepreneur in informatics and digital design, and raises the student’s awareness of the legal, business, managerial, creative, analytical and interpersonal skills relevant to setting up and running an innovative ICT application company. The primary focus, matching the “Informatics Entrepreneurship 1” course, is on the development of an opportunity assessment for companies directly exploiting Informatics technologies. The secondary aspect of the course for students taking the course for 20 credits is the development of a rigorous business plan building on the opportunity assessment. This will include: further market analysis, competition research and analysis, building competitive advantage, the development of marketing strategy including sales plans, the building of a human resource strategy and management plan, business modeling, presentation development and pitching, and projecting the financial performance of the new venture.

Digital Media Studio Project
Students work as a group on a collaborative, extended project that brings together their various design skills in the context of a selection of exploratory project briefs. The briefs may lead to the development of a documentary, sound installation, live performance or a bespoke interactive interface. The course will be conducted as a studio with iterative development, group discussion, design development, presentations, criticism, and feedback. Tuition will be provided in the use of computer tools and devices where applicable and the course is supplemented by a range of visiting speakers.

Summer Project
This is the main project, the equivalent of the Master’s Dissertation in other programmes, which may be pursued as a group or individual exercise. Work should commence after the end of teaching in semester 2 and continue to the submission date towards the end of August. It aims to:

- allow students to demonstrate how they have integrated knowledge and skills achieved in the MSc;
- develop particular applications of digital media design;
- employ investigative methods of creative problem-solving;
- encourage and develop the practice of group working.

Why Edinburgh?
Edinburgh is one of the chief cultural centres of Europe, most noticeably in the summer when the city is overrun with the International Edinburgh Festival (www.eif.co.uk) and the sprawling, energetic Fringe Festival (www.edfringe.com). However, throughout the year, the city hosts innumerable concerts, art exhibitions, installations, plays and talks across its plentiful venues. The University of Edinburgh is deeply involved in the cultural life of the city and academics in ECA are key in the design and curation of several festivals, especially in music and sonic...
arts. Edinburgh is also an idea vantage point from which to explore the rich cultural scene elsewhere in Scotland: Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen.

During Term time, the University runs a series of free lunchtime concerts. The Talbot Rice Gallery and the Matthew Architecture Gallery provide year-round programmes of exhibitions and installations. There is a large and vibrant postgraduate community here and there are many opportunities to meet internationally renowned speakers at the research seminars organised by the various departments in the school.

Students at the University also benefit from well-resourced libraries, both the central main library and those attached to individual subject areas, several of which have recently been enhanced. Design and Digital Media occupies well-equipped studios available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, with an advanced network of mainly Apple computers enjoying dedicated technical support.

More generally, Edinburgh is a great place for students to live, with all the cultural resources of a capital city and a large postgraduate student population. For more information about student life in Edinburgh, see www.ed.ac.uk/studying/.

Staff

The Design and Digital Media MSc is overseen by Head of ESALA Professor Fiona McLachlan and its Programme Director Professor John Lee.

Many other staff contribute to the programme in a variety of important ways. We also enjoy a range of visiting speakers who come to talk on specific areas of practice or academic research.

Entry requirements

We normally require candidates to have obtained, or expect to obtain, a degree with a 2.1 or equivalent grade. Evidence of enthusiastic commitment to studying our subject area is more important than the discipline of the first degree.

Tuition fees and funding

In line with other taught masters programmes in our school, tuition fees for the MSc/Dip Design and Digital Media, academic year 2012/13 are as follows:

- Home/EU students: £5,750
- Overseas students: £14,400

There is also an additional programme fee of £800.

Fees for 2013/14 may be subject to revision.

There are several sources of funding available for Home, EU and overseas students. More information can be found at www.scholarships.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/index.htm.

Note

This prospectus should be read in conjunction with the Edinburgh Postgraduate Prospectus 2013 available in hard copy from the University Registry, and at www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/.

The Edinburgh Postgraduate Prospectus includes information on the University of Edinburgh Mission Statement, the University and city of Edinburgh, levels of postgraduate study, associated institutions, applications and admission, international students, accommodation and other services, and further information on other faculties and degree offerings (including fees and terms and conditions). Note that all details in this programme prospectus are subject to change, and confirmation with programme staff should be sought where required.