

# MA Design Writing Criticism

For more information  
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London College of Communication  
Elephant & Castle London SE1 6SB

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**Level:** Postgraduate  
**Study Mode:** Full-time or Part-time  
**Duration:** Full-time: 1 year Part-time: 2 years  
**Start date:** October  
**Application:** Directly to the College

## Course Description

MA Design Writing Criticism is the first of its kind in Europe. International attention given to the role of writing and criticism has increased significantly over the last decade. The design discipline itself has engendered wider public discourse as well as maintaining debate with studio practice and the academy.

As boundaries of design blur and interdisciplinarity becomes an essential direction in fostering innovation, design writing criticism will be key in enabling designers and producers to evaluate their own positions within a broader context of the social, political, economic, technological and global frameworks. It is with this in mind that the curriculum explores the impact of writing and criticism on contemporary design thinking and professional practice and takes as its starting point the way in which the image and a combination thereof, may be used to carry a point of view. In doing so, the course is structured to encourage you to examine conventional written forms of journalism and criticism and, as appropriate, the more seemingly nontraditional forms of the 'new visual journalism'.

## Course Philosophy

The overarching course philosophy is an emphasis on research, process and critical thinking, and allows individual and personal concerns to be explored through focused study in one particular area of Design Writing Criticism. This programme proposes that critique is developed through a deeper understanding and engagement with:

writing about design  
writing into design  
design as writing.

Writing about design focuses on exploring the area of 'critical journalism' in which the communicative/stylistic/accessible potential of journalistic writing is combined with more in-depth engagement and critical positioning of design and related fields. Writing into design focuses on the critique. It also

explores the notion of critical practices in design history and theory as well as examining alternative histories through contemporary design practices. Design as writing places an emphasis on ways in which the visual and its potential may in and of itself become a critical framework/component for exploring 'points of view'.

### Course Structure

There are three main stages to this programme:

#### Postgraduate Diploma Phase

Phase 1 explores through a series of projects and assignments a set of fundamental questions focusing on defining concepts such as 'what is design' and 'what is criticism' in contemporary professional practice. It will also introduce you to a general overview of design history and theory, sequential structures, research methods and the theories and principles of journalism and criticism.

Phase 2 examines, in more depth, the profession of design journalism and criticism examining the nature of professional practice and the position of design within contemporary debates and the role of criticism. You will explore multicultural perspectives and rhetoric in design and writing as well as examining how new technologies are creating new venues for design journalism/criticism.

#### MA Phase

Phase 3 allows for the development of an agreed, self-initiated major project, either a traditional written thesis or one with supporting practical work. You will be encouraged to take advantage of our strong links with editors, journalists and critics working nationally and internationally in magazine, newspaper and the publishing industries. You will be taught by experienced design writers, and by specialists in design history, architecture and curation. You will also benefit from the School's Postgraduate Research Methods programme and from our guest lecturer programme of visiting scholars and leading professionals.

### FAQs

#### How do I apply?

Directly to the College. Application forms are available on the LCC website [www.lcc.arts.ac.uk](http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk) or by emailing [info@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:info@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

International Students apply via the LCC International Office. Further information and application forms can be found on the University website: <http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/international.htm>

#### Is there a deadline for applications?

There is no official deadline, but the earlier we receive your application the better. It is desirable to have received your application prior to 1 September for processing.

#### What qualifications do I need?

An Honours Degree in a relevant subject, or a professional or academic qualification recognised as equivalent to an Honours Degree.

If you do not have the required qualifications, but do have professional

experience you may be eligible to gain credit for previous learning and experience through the AP(E)L system. Your experience is assessed as a learning process and tutors will evaluate that experience for currency, validity, quality and sufficiency.

If you are applying directly from a BA Course, without experience of professional practice, you must be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of visual and/or design practices which will be supported by a good degree and portfolio of work – either written or practice-led.

#### **What should I put in my portfolio?**

Your portfolio should provide evidence of your ability to write and critically engage with a subject. In the cases where a candidate has been involved in professional practice, evidence of your most recent commercial or academic activity, showing your aptitude and ability in writing/journalism and/or design and/or related visual areas. This can be supported with documents showing your working processes and research (e.g. sketchbooks) and written examples (e.g. essays, articles). Also include any other projects that indicate your personal areas of interest in the field of design, writing, and/or journalism.

#### **How long is the course?**

One year Full-time; two years Part-time.

#### **I am an overseas student. Are the requirements different?**

Further to the general entry requirements, a good command of English is essential. Overseas students must have an IELTS qualification to a minimum of Level 7. International Students should also apply directly to the College. Further information and application forms can be found on the University website: [www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/international.htm](http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/international.htm)

#### **How long would I spend in college per week? Is it possible to work part-time while studying?**

The full-time course is timetabled for three days a week contact time that includes tutorials, seminars, lectures and project reviews. You will be expected to work beyond this time on self-directed study. Around this, many students do manage to fit in part-time work, but college work must take a priority.

The part-time mode of the course is specifically designed for students needing to work their way through the course, having one day of regular weekly contact time agreed with their workplace.

#### **When does the course start?**

October each year.

#### **Where is the course taught?**

At the London College of Communication, Elephant and Castle, SE1 6SB.

#### **What kind of people should I expect to meet on the course?**

Generally the full-time course is made up of around fifty percent International Students and fifty percent Home/EU. Students come from right round the globe and across Europe.

The part-time course is mostly made up of Home/EU.

### **How is the course delivered? What kind of projects would I be working on?**

The course is structured around three main taught phases which provide the foundation for exploring further specific areas of a self-initiated major project in the final phase. A series of workshops, lectures programmes and tutorials are punctuated with group reviews of work with an elective programme providing you with additional ‘tasters’ of related areas of study. Units One and Two span the first half of the year, and are designed to develop a range of research methodologies and practical and critical skills. These may inform the development of an independent, self-initiated MA project. There is also a potential exit point from the course at PgDip level at the end of Unit Two.

The second half of the year, Unit Three, is dedicated to the development and realisation of a self-initiated Major Project. The programme addresses the discipline of writing and criticism by reinforcing the importance of research and critical thinking in relation to the field of design and its related visual areas. Building on each student’s previous experience and personal approaches to design, projects are structured with a clear statement of intent, focus and methodology at the proposal stage. This will be discussed and agreed upon with your tutor.

### **What kind of project is suitable for the Major Project?**

Students develop a Major Project Proposal during Unit Two of the course, supported by seminars and workshops in research methodologies and personal tutorials. The specific content of the project is determined by the student and in negotiation with your tutor. It is intended that the proposal will be developed in relation to one of the main themes of the course: writing about design, writing into design, or design as writing. Within this, projects may examine a specific area of personal interest. All projects are, however, underpinned with a clearly defined set of intentions and appropriate research methodologies through which to conduct experiments with potential visual outcomes.

### **What are the facilities like?**

The MA Design Writing Criticism course is based within the postgraduate and research area of the School of Graphic Design. Students are normally expected to have their own computing equipment with the basic software packages (e.g. Word, InDesign). There is limited access to equipment held in the postgraduate design studios which is equipped with computing and laser printing facilities, a wireless network point for laptop connectivity to the College network, and seminar, teaching and tutorial spaces.

In addition to access to college facilities such as the library and open-access IT, the School of Graphic Design has workshops providing access facilities such as printmaking, letterpress, photography and IT where these are relevant to the curriculum on a student’s course. Technical advice is normally available, but you should note that each facility operates a booking system.

Where appropriate, practical demonstrations on your course may be given on technical skills that can enhance your understanding of materials, processes and methods and enable focused analysis and exploration of design research. At Masters Level, Elective Units are the typical mode of delivery for this type of learning. For the MA Design Writing Criticism access to specialist workshops and facilities must be negotiated with your course tutor and relate to your major project work. For all students, access to workshop facilities for project work is conditional on having relevant prior practical knowledge and skills and having demonstrated an understanding of appropriate health and safety protocols and practice.

### **What do students do after they finish the course?**

All students leaving the course find their opportunities in the workplace have broadened with a focus on design journalism, writing and criticism. For those continuing with their own design practice, students have found their work to be enhanced by an appropriate reflective and critical understanding.

### **What's special about this course?**

The course provides a framework for academic discussion and personal development, enhancing a student's ability to critically reflect, allowing them to initiate new and effective approaches to the subject and to engage with problems and insights at the forefront of the discipline. We aim to equip students to propose, research, develop and complete a self-directed project that reflects originality, critical analysis and evaluation underpinned with academic rigour.

### **How much does it cost?**

Please visit the University of the Arts website for further information on fees and money for both Home/EU and International Students: [http://www.arts.ac.uk/fees\\_money.htm](http://www.arts.ac.uk/fees_money.htm)

### **Quotes about the course from the design community:**

'If graphic design wants to be taken seriously as a profession, it badly needs to raise its profile outside of the industry. As far as reputation in the broadcast media and national press is concerned, things have reached an all-time low – hence the widespread mocking of the new 2012 logo on Breakfast TV, and the designers' subsequent inability to comment. There needs to be a greater understanding of the relevance and wider influence of graphic design by creating a serious, thoughtful and relevant discourse around the subject. The more people who can write fluently and accessibly about graphic design, the more people will be able to engage with and understand what designers are trying to achieve. This is what makes this course a particularly timely, relevant and exciting proposition.'

**Caroline Roberts, Publisher and Editor, Grafik**

'For too long design has been left in an intellectual ghetto. While fine art and architecture have long possessed a cadre of established critics with regular columns in the review section of national newspapers, design has generally been relegated to the Shopping and Lifestyle departments. It's my fervent hope that a course like this - which should create its own generation of informed articulate critics - will begin to change the way that the industry is perceived at large.'

**Grant Gibson, freelance Design Writer and former Editor of Blueprint**

'That I hope such a postgraduate course in Design Writing Criticism will make us look at our trade more critically, and in the process, inculcate a social responsibility so lacking in a profession that is still very young.'

**Leon Leong Wai Pung, Minimus Design, Malaysia**