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Master Curriculum

Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography)

at the University of Art and Design Linz (Kunstuniversität Linz)

Decision of the Senate of 22 April 2009

The Senate of the University of Art and Industrial Design Linz adopts the present Master Curriculum for 'Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography)' according to the University Organisation and Studies Act (UG 2002, BGBl. Nr. 120/2002) in its present version. Amended by decision of the Curricula Committee of 28 April 2010, amended by decision of the Curricula Committee of 2 June 2010, amended by decision of the Curricula Committee of 9 March 2011, amended by decision of the Curricula Committee of 8 June 2016, amended by decision of the Curricula Committee of 6 June 2018

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1. Study objectives and qualification profile

- 1.1 Curriculum
- 1.2 Teaching and study objectives
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1.1 Curriculum

The increasing digitalisation of our living and working environments creates new intersections as well as methodological and creative possibilities for the development of words and images. In the globalised communication spaces of our time, content messages are made available especially by use of visual tools and methods.

The master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography) at the University of Art and Design Linz is a two-year programme for students who want to address new realities of today's communication and the interplay of text and image in traditional and new media in order to convey information and make it visible using visual forms of expression.

Students can lay an individual focus on either graphic design or photography, while a shared understanding and the knowledge of current developments in the field of visual communication are applied methodologically and conceptually. Openness to a constructive discourse of different approaches allows for an added value for both disciplines and hence for the students, supporting the conceptual as well as the methodological and the technical course of projects.

1.2 Teaching and study objectives

The programme is not only aimed at qualifying graduates for independent work in the fields of graphic design and/or photography. It is also designed to convey further information on current developments in the field of visual communication in theory and practice.

This requires engagement with specific artistic, conceptual, practical, creative, technical and theoretical competencies. In addition to the skills to approach the complexity of the subject and to develop individual positions and profiles, students gain knowledge concerning conceptual and work strategies, techniques of presentation, publication and production as well as impact and aesthetics.

During the process- and problem-oriented modules of the master programme, students develop their own artistic-scientific works within the frame of transdisciplinary projects. They are encouraged to do project-oriented research and to develop openness towards social, political and artistic problems.

Focus

The master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography) is designed as an individual research space. It places high demands on creativity. Innovative methods and techniques promote experiments focusing on practical and project-based work.

The scope of visual communication extends to the development and implementation of visual ideas involving aspects of design and image processing. The goal is to impart interdisciplinary thinking and thus prepare graduates for the constantly changing tasks of professional life.

Due to digitalisation, the range of tasks in the field of graphic design has expanded significantly. This entails an increase of methodological approaches, especially from an interdisciplinary point of view. A graphic designer's job profile has evolved into the position of a 'universal producer', an autonomous conception and production unit for visual communication. In order to train a generation of versatile designers, the master programme Visual Communication with a focus on graphic design combines subjects like two-dimensional conceptual design with screen-based media design, typography and information design and also deals with subjects like text and marketing.

The graduates of the master programme Visual Communication with a focus on photography can apply the acquired knowledge and skills in all areas of photography – not only in technical respect, but also in critical discourse and analysis. One of the goals is to develop an individual visual language. The development of an independent approach to photography and the interdisciplinary work with various media, spatial installations and techniques of performance and drawing aim at expanding the photographic range. The diversity of photography should find expression in all areas and become visible through the individual reflection of socially relevant issues.

1.3 Qualification profile

The master programme enables graduates to conceptualise and create visual messages. They are qualified to achieve professional independence in the field of creative industries and to conceive, design and head projects from an analytical and creative perspective. They are able to recognise their clients' structural processes and contexts and know how to translate them into visual messages. Self-reflection and the ability to promote individual work are part of the skills acquired in the course of the master programme. In addition, the programme facilitates graduates' development into authors of artistic messages and thus enables them to appear in the context of exhibitions and presentations in the design and art scene.

2. Academic degree

Graduates of the master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography) receive the academic degree 'Master of Arts', abbreviated 'MA', which is written after the holder's name.

3. Programme structure and contents

3.1 Basic structure

The master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography) at the University of Art and Design Linz comprises 4 semesters with a total of 120 ECTS points. Average academic performance is 30 ECTS points per semester. 15 ECTS points must be acquired in the form of free electives offered by a recognised domestic or foreign university.

The curriculum of the first three semesters consists of the following modules:

The mandatory project module 'Atelier' (studio) forms the core of the programme, comprising 15 ECTS points per semester.

Project module 'Atelier' 45 ECTS

A second mandatory module comprises the courses revolving around 'Aesthetics & Context'. It forms the theoretical fundamentals of the programme.

Mandatory module 'Aesthetics & Context' 10 ECTS

In addition to the Free Electives ('Freie Wahlfächer'), especially the compulsory electives of the Elective Competencies ('Wahlkompetenzen') allow for an individual, specialised setting of priorities. The programme includes mandatory courses connecting to economic aspects and a range of courses relating to the fields of graphic design and photography. The goal is to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of specific techniques and theories incorporating current issues.

Elective Competencies (total) 20 ECTS

Free Electives 15 ECTS

In addition to the mandatory 'Kolloquium' (discussion course) and 'Communication and Presentation', the fourth semester gives students time for the development of a master project.

Master project 26 ECTS

'Kolloquium' on the master project 4 ECTS

Master programme - total 120 ECTS

3.2 Module types

Project module 'Atelier' (3 x 15 ECTS)

The project module 'Atelier' consists of:

- an introductory lecture
- a lab for the development of projects
- a lecture (including an exercise) imparting theories and methods (5 ECTS)
- a final presentation

The introductory lecture gives students orientation and a content outline for the respective semester.

Students choose their individual focus – graphic design or photography – at the beginning of each semester and attend the corresponding methodology lecture. The purpose of this lecture is systematic and in-depth transfer of knowledge, including its practical application.

The lab offers several thematic blocks from which all students can choose – regardless of individual focus. Students approach them according to their individual focus. After choosing a focus and a thematic block, students engage in three different types of work: practical work, team work and free work. For the team work, one graphic designer and one photographer partner up to work on the chosen subject. The following semesters allow students to choose their work methods (free, practical or team) but they are required to submit three works from the selectable thematic blocks. The purpose of the lab is practical engagement. It offers kick-off lectures as well as individual artistic supervision.

Depending on the focus, the accompanying lecture on theory and methodology offers in-depth content which is useful for practical implementation. The graphic design focus addresses in-depth theories of the following areas: experimental typography, information design and methods of design drafting. The photography focus covers subjects like applied photography, experimental photography and image conception.

The project module 'Atelier' is concluded by a presentation event where all students present the semester's work to their classmates and lecturers. In addition to practical work, theoretical engagement with the relevant methods and fields of knowledge is required.

The atelier can be complemented by various other forms of teaching and learning (e.g. excursions, workshops).

The atelier's content structure during the first three semesters follows the principle of artistic profile development. The emphasis lies on the following subjects:

Semester 1: corporate communication – an approach to aspects of visual communication regarding business companies, organisations and practical applications.

Semester 2: visualisation – further engagement with free and abstract subjects or with issues of the visualisation of abstract or concrete information, respectively.

Semester 3: reflection and change of perspective – Students examine their individual personalities and the possibilities of adopting new positions and using acquired knowledge in new ways.

Course contents and methods as well as evaluation criteria are announced by the lecturers at the beginning of each semester.

Module 'Aesthetics / Context' (10 ECTS)

This mandatory module imparts the backgrounds of cultural theory concerning current and future trends of media design in greater depth. It includes further courses covering subjects from the fields of aesthetics, art and design history, specific media theory and textualization.

Elective Competencies (20 ECTS)

The Elective Competencies consist of mandatory and elective subjects. They are not necessarily assigned to a specific semester.

Mandatory Subjects (5 ECTS in total)

Courses from the fields of marketing and media, entrepreneurship and project management create a reference to the economic realities of professional, independent graphic designers and photographers.

Compulsory Electives (15 ECTS in total)

...offer professional specialisation and in-depth exploration of the methods and skills relating to the selected focus (graphic design or photography).

Free Electives (15 ECTS)

Are to be chosen from the range of courses offered by recognised domestic or foreign universities.

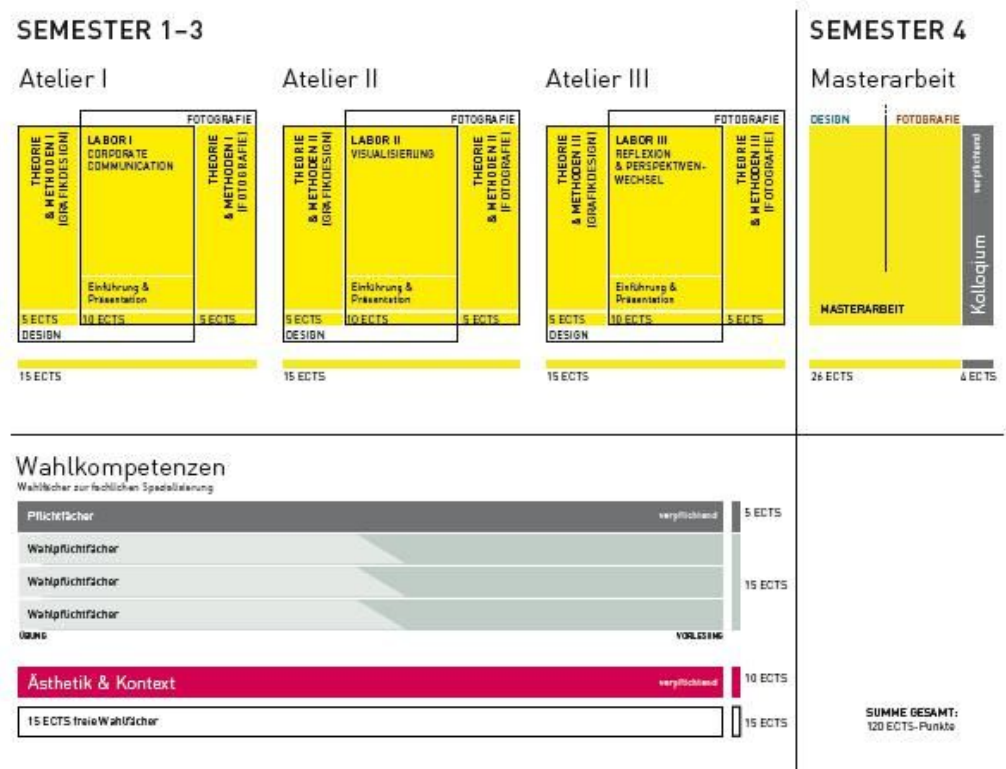
Final Semester and Master Project (30 ECTS)

The fourth semester consists of a master project and the mandatory courses 'Kolloquium' (thesis discussion course) and 'Communication & Presentation'.

Master project 26 ECTS

Kolloquium 4 ECTS

3.3 Order of study and overview



3.4 Forms of teaching and learning

Depending on content alignment or the respective project, the modules combine different forms of teaching, learning and working.

VO = Lecture (Vorlesung)

A lecture offers systematic and/or deepening transfer of knowledge. It provides insight into the state of research and the subjects and methods of the discipline. An active role is generally reserved for the lecturer.

PA = Project Work (Projektarbeit)

Project work is the central form of teaching. It connects and integrates all study fields and deploys theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, all working steps are applied and refined – from the formulation of goals, project conception and project development to the presentation of results. Project work also helps students determine their own positions and offers individual artistic coaching or group supervision as needed. It is the teachers' task to guide, to counsel and to give feedback. Student performance during the entire project period influences the grade. Working methods and working goals are discussed and reflected on.

WO = Workshop

Workshops do not apply any specific method. In-depth knowledge concerning specific subjects is imparted through different approaches (impulse lectures, exercises, feedback conversations, small research papers, drafts). Intensive engagement with a specific subject within a short period of time facilitates a personal dialogue between teachers and students.

SE = Seminar

Seminars are at the interface of knowledge transfer and independent learning. Artistic and/or scientific dialogue clarifies positions and promotes articulation and communication skills. The active role switches between teachers and students, allowing for productive interaction.

EX = Excursion

Excursions are block courses aiming at the perception of phenomena, processes and situations on site.

KO = Kolloquium (discussion course)

These courses promote further scientific and artistic dialogue and the collaborative development of topical problems concerning media, art and cultural studies. Theoretical and/or artistic engagement, critique and analysis as well as the development and discussion of participants' thesis papers, individual works and/or drafts form the subjects of a 'Kolloquium'.

4. Examination regulations

Courses are completed with a proof of achievement corresponding to the respective teaching method. Examiners must announce the contents and forms of assessment in advance and in an appropriate manner.

4.1 Master project and examination

The master project must concentrate on either graphic design or photography. The chosen subject is also stated on the master project certificate. Beforehand, at least two semesters of 'Atelier' focusing on the chosen area of specialisation must be completed (e.g. two semesters focusing on graphic design, one semester focusing on photography, or vice versa).

Completion of the programme consists of three parts: a written master thesis, a project work and an oral presentation in front of an expert committee.

The written thesis includes documentation of the project work with a comprehensive description of one of its aspects or with a review of the contents surrounding the project with the aid of scientific methods.

The oral part is the final board examination. The student's master project advisor participates in the evaluation. The examination concentrates on the chosen focus and the subject of the project work. Admission to the examination requires successful completion of all programme courses and/or modules and the written master thesis.

The subject of the master thesis must be chosen in accordance with the student's thesis advisor. Workload should be manageable and completion of the thesis should not require more than six months.

The final project grade is calculated proportionally: master thesis (30%), practical project work (50%) and final board examination (20%). If a student decides to do develop an exclusively theoretical master project, the following allocation applies: theoretical master thesis (60%), oral board examination (40%).

In addition to the assessment of individual courses, students receive an overall grade of "passed" if every subject has been completed successfully, or "failed" if this is not the case. If no subject was assessed with a grade worse than "gut" (good) and at least half of all subjects were graded "sehr gut" (very good), the overall assessment is "mit Auszeichnung bestanden" (passed with distinction).

5. Admission requirements

Admission to the master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography) at the University of Art and Design Linz requires the completion of a relevant bachelor programme at a university or a university of applied sciences with a focus on visual communication: e.g. visual communication, graphic design, photography, communication design, information design, time-based and interactive media, or the diploma programme Media Design (Diplomstudium Mediengestaltung). A degree in a closely related discipline can also be accepted if it involves the basic knowledge required for the master programme Visual Communication. The head of studies decides on acceptance at the suggestion of the selection committee. Under certain circumstances, the completion of specific additional courses may be required. Generally, the same admission requirements apply to applicants with a diploma.

In any case, an interview including the presentation of work samples must confirm artistic aptitude.

Acceptance interview

Applicants must demonstrate their specific qualification for the master programme in the course of an interview which requires timely pre-registration.

Artistic aptitude is verified in the course of an interview with the selection committee: Applicants present individual work relating to the academic profile and explain their personal motivation and goals for the master programme Visual Communication (Graphic Design and Photography).