Module Specification

Design Futures

Version: 2026-27, v1.0, Approved

Contents

Part 1: Information

Module title: Design Futures

Module code: UA1B9T-30-2

Level: Level 5

For implementation from: 2026-27

UWE credit rating: 30

ECTS credit rating: 15

College: College of Arts, Technology and Environment

School: CATE School of Arts

Partner institutions: None

Field: Visual Culture

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: The Design Futures module introduces students to a range of future facing design methodologies to address real world social, political and environmental challenges. In an age of uncertainty in which social challenges, political upheaval and environmental degradation are rapidly reshaping the context of design, this module will enable students to think both with and beyond their disciplinary area. Students will work collaboratively to respond to one or more design challenges within externally set briefs (e.g., from industry, community, NGO etc.) and/ or school-based

briefs. The collaborative element is fundamental to encourage students to think outside their specific discipline and work in teams to generate innovative and practical solutions. Students will engage with both theoretical and practical aspects of design, essential for real-world application.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: This module aims to instil students with a future orientated mindset for design, rooted in an understanding of the evolving and complex nature of global challenges. In particular, the world needs graduates that understand ideas such as the Anthropocene, and the module emphasises the role of design in addressing global challenges through interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration, equipping students with the tools to communicate these ideas effectively across diverse platforms and media in the service of society.

Outline syllabus: The skills instilled through this module will equip learners with transferrable knowledge and experience that are appropriate for a breadth of design adjacent careers. Indicative content includes

Design thinking

Future facing design methodologies

Design methodologies might include speculative design, service design, sustainable design, social design, regenerative design, participatory design and circular design.

Product lifecycles

Design interventions

Theoretical and contextual aspects of design

Critical reflective writing

Team working, collaboration skills, conflict management

Project and time management skills

Work collaboratively with cross disciplinary tutors and/or external partners in digital and real-world contexts

Professional ethics and responsibility

Presentation and exhibition of work

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: The module is typically delivered via externally set and/or school-based project briefs, design tasks, group critiques, design workshops, technical workshops, group tutorials, field trips and independent study. Taught sessions build students skills, knowledge and understanding of different approaches to design methodologies in interdisciplinary design contexts.

Scheduled face to face learning and teaching may include taught studio sessions, lectures (in person or virtual), seminars, group tutorials, workshops, fieldwork, external visits and group project critiques. Independent and self-guided study may include engagement with creative, academic and technical development, visual and textual research, workshop activity and learning via the VLE outside of taught sessions.

Students will respond to a design challenge through an appropriately aligned design methodology. This may involve research, analysis, experimentation and development, testing, prototyping and presentation of a body of work for a specified context. A central module requirement is the development of reflective design journals, which play a key role in learning, teaching, and assessment. The design journals will capture individual processes, research, ideation, design development, critical reflection, and action planning. The module also encourages an ethical, responsible and sustainable approach to the use and sourcing of materials.

The module offers engagement with a variety of design methodologies to consider and explore different ways of responding to current and future challenges. Each methodology brings a unique perspective to problem-solving. Design methodologies presented in this module may include speculative design (imagining alternative futures), design fiction (focus on narrative and storytelling), service design (creating systems and experiences), sustainable design (long term ecological thinking), social design (social needs and equity), regenerative design (systems that restore and enhance), participatory design (involving stakeholders in the design process) and circular design.

Teaching methods for this module are dynamic, reflective, process-driven, and

designed to foster experimental, innovative and collaborative approaches to design. They support the development of a breadth of research methods, encouraging students to apply and synthesise research across a variety of contexts. Students are supported in developing critical, analytical, creative and evaluative skills through a range of inclusive teaching mechanisms. A focus on communication skills, both visual and verbal, helps students express their ideas clearly in various formats, with access to centrally available UWE Study Skills. Interdisciplinary collaboration is a core part of this module and teaching approaches are employed to foster collaborative student working practices.

The reading and resource list is designed to be accessible and inclusive, supporting a wide range of learning styles by providing materials across multiple formats and media. The reading list has been designed to amplify a diverse range of critical and creative voices, ensuring representation across multiple perspectives, disciplines and global regions.

The module has been designed to build on design skills and learning outcomes achieved in the L4 Design Cluster module, Design Contexts. Teaching moves from an ethos of guiding to co-creating.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Explore and analyse established conventions within the student's field, identifying opportunities for innovation and pushing creative boundaries.

MO2 Enhance project management skills, managing tasks and time effectively and demonstrating adaptability.

MO3 Take on roles within collaborative projects, demonstrating effective communication, the ability to share tasks, and contribute to a positive team dynamic.

MO4 Refine their ability to critically evaluate sources, developing nuanced interpretations and support analysis with evidence.

Hours to be allocated: 300

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 228 hours

Face-to-face learning = 72 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: This module takes a programmatic approach to assessment. Summative assessment is via Group Work which includes (1) creative practical group outcome, (2) individual contextual report based on group activity and (3) individual reflective design journal.

The assessment structure for the module reflects the emphasis on interdisciplinary and design-based collaboration. This approach evaluates the collective creative output of the group project and allows students to reflect individually on their learning from - and contribution to - the interdisciplinary design process.

The group outcome enables students to collaboratively apply their design methods, drawing on diverse perspectives and skills, to address the real-world challenges posed by the module. This encourages teamwork, communication, and the synthesis of ideas from various disciplines, which is central to the module's aims. The individual contextual report requires students to reflect critically on the group's work, their role in the process, and how interdisciplinary learning influenced the outcome. This provides an opportunity for students to articulate their understanding of the project's broader context, incorporating insights from research and personal contributions.

Students will receive regular feedback formatively via midpoint group presentations or open studio exhibition, as well as during group tutorials. This provides students with timely and detailed understanding of their progress and provides clear feed-forward guidance regarding future development.

At Level 5 stepped marking is utilised. Students receive individual stepped marks based on a combination of their common group project outcome, their differentiated individual reports and reflective design journals. This assessment structure is designed to enable students to achieve and evidence the learning outcomes of the module. Learning outcomes are assessed via school level assessment rubrics that ensure levels of achievement are clearly articulated and that all students are marked with parity across the student body. Students are assessed holistically.

Within the Group Work submission, students are expected to present evidence of work which demonstrates engagement with the minimum number of contact hours for the module, as well as the minimum number of independent study hours.

The second stage of the assessment is an individual report that is developed out of the previous group project; this will limit opportunities to plagiarise from secondary sources or use AI tools.

Students who do not pass at the first sit will be given a re-sit opportunity. The resit assessment will include a creative practical individual outcome and an individual contextual report.

Assessment tasks:

Project (First Sit)
Description: Group project and individual report
Weighting: 100 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: Yes
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

Project (Resit)
Description: Individual project and report
Weighting: 100 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Fashion Communication [Bower] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Product Design [Bower] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Product Design Technology [Bower] BSc (Hons) 2025-26

Fashion Communication {Foundation} [Bower] BA (Hons) 2024-25

Graphic Design [Arnolfini] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Illustration [Bower] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Interior Design [Bower] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Fashion Textiles [Bower] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Interior Design {Foundation} [Bower] BA (Hons) 2024-25

Illustration {Foundation}[Bower] BA (Hons) 2024-25

Graphic Design {Foundation} [Arnolfini] BA (Hons) 2024-25

Fashion Textiles {Foundation} [Bower] BA (Hons) 2024-25