

Post-16 Curriculum - Graphics

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Graphics
Qualification / Specification	A Level Art and Design: Graphic Communication
Awarding Body	OCR
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Rich Wiseman
Teaching Staff	SJ Rogers
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

Purpose:

- Develop visual communication, creativity, and problem-solving through design briefs.
- Build understanding of design principles, industry-standard software, and techniques.
- Research and analyse historical and contemporary design.
- Create a portfolio showing idea development, experimentation, and final outcomes.

Progression and Destinations:

- Builds on GCSE Art and progresses from teacher-led to independent projects.
- Provides opportunities to respond to real-world briefs and develop a strong personal portfolio.
- Broadens aspirations through exposure to diverse designers, movements, and cultures.
- Prepares students for foundation courses, higher education, apprenticeships, and careers in the creative industries.

Meeting Industry and Higher Educational needs:

- Develops creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and self-management.
- Builds confidence in presenting ideas, evaluating work, and responding to feedback.
- Develops proficiency in digital design processes and software, preparing students for creative workplaces.
- Encourages resilience and adaptability by requiring students to respond to feedback and refine outcomes.
- Exposes students to contemporary design trends, cultural influences, and industry contexts, ensuring learning remains current and ambitious.
- Prepares students for further study in graphic design, illustration, animation, advertising, digital media, architecture, and other related creative disciplines.
- Produces evidence of practical, analytical, and conceptual skills through a substantial portfolio of work.

Success:

Students leave the course as confident, independent and reflective designers who can communicate creative ideas effectively. They demonstrate strong technical and conceptual skills, critical understanding of visual communication, and the ability to develop, refine and present final outcomes. They are well prepared for progression to either higher education, apprenticeships or employment within the creative industries.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Core (Key Principles)	Develops an understanding of the key principles of graphic design, including colour, balance, alignment, contrast, repetition, and visual hierarchy.	These design principles are the foundation of effective graphic design.
Contextual Understanding	Introduces the history and development of graphic design, including influential designers, movements, and cultural contexts.	This knowledge helps students understand where current design practices come from and why certain styles, techniques, and practices exist.
Techniques and Development Visual Communication	Develops understanding of typography and its role in communicating meaning and creating visual impact.	Understanding typography helps students to communicate tone, mood, and style through type choices. Students will be able to utilise effective visual hierarchy so viewers can easily navigate information. It can also enhance the overall aesthetic and effectiveness of a design.
Contextual Understanding	Explores how images, icons, and visual language are used to convey messages to different audiences.	Knowing how images and icons communicate ideas helps students create designs that people can easily understand and connect with.

Techniques and Development Audience and Purpose	Builds knowledge of branding, advertising, illustration and editorial design.	Aids students to create the right type of design for different purposes, such as promoting a brand, advertising a product, or communicating information in books, magazines, and other media.
Techniques, Processes and materials	Introduces relevant materials, processes, and software used within contemporary graphic communication.	Students learn how to use industry-standard software to create effective and professional designs.
Contextual Understanding	Encourages understanding of critical and contextual studies to inform creative decision-making.	Students will think more deeply about their work by understanding ideas, influences, and context. It allows them to make better creative decisions that are thoughtful, purposeful, and informed rather than just based on personal taste.
Core	Provides the core understanding needed to support creative practice, analysis, and independent project development.	Gives students the skills and understanding they need to create, evaluate, and develop their own work independently.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
Audience and Purpose: Understanding how visuals help people communicate ideas and understand meaning.	Helps students create graphics that clearly communicate ideas and meaning.	Students' work shows an understanding of visual communication.
Design Principles: Applying design principles to solve design problems.	Helps students to create graphics that are effective, not just decorative.	High quality outcomes in students' portfolios.
Contextual Understanding: Making connections between research and contextual knowledge, then interpreting information to inform creative decisions.	Supports students to connect research with creative practice, informing design decisions that are effective for an intended purpose.	Shown through the ability to analyse research, make connections between influences and design work, and apply these insights to justify creative decisions and develop informed outcomes.
Design Processes: Using research and feedback to improve and refine outcomes.	To help students use research and feedback to refine ideas and create more effective outcomes.	Demonstrated by using research and feedback to improve, refine, and clarify design decisions throughout the development process.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Year 12				
Autumn 1 - Unit 1: Exploring digital techniques	Introduction to the Adobe Creative Suite.	Navigate the Adobe Creative Suite confidently.	Understanding how different Adobe applications are used for specific design purposes.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.

through portraiture.	Exploring the work of Andy Tuohy.	Understand the purpose of key applications (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign). Use basic tools and panels effectively. Work with layers and artboards. Follow a basic design workflow from concept to final outcome, making connections to the assessment objectives.	Knowing how digital design processes are used in the creative industries. Understanding how software tools can be used to communicate ideas visually and effectively. Recognising industry-standard practices for presenting design work.	Summative - specific feedback at the end of the unit.
Autumn 2 - Graphic Portraiture.	Independent application of skill to resolve the Portrait project. Exploring the work of an independently selected artist linking to portraiture.	Apply design skills independently to develop a portrait outcome. Select and use appropriate tools and techniques effectively. Experiment and refine ideas through sustained development. Make informed creative decisions based on research and feedback. Confidently analyse the work of others using visual evidence, art vocabulary, and contextual awareness. Present a finished outcome that communicates the intended concept.	Confidently apply techniques independently to develop a resolved portrait. Apply tools and processes with accuracy and purpose. Refine work through self evaluation, research, and feedback. Create a strong final piece that communicates ideas effectively. Being able to look closely at artwork and explain observations and what it means using evidence.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class. Summative - specific feedback at the end of the unit.
Spring 1 - Unit 2: Exploration of Typography.	Looking at type as an illustration	Using typography, layout, and Swiss Style design principles	Making connections between research and contextual knowledge, then interpreting	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.

	tool and the influence of the Swiss style. Both physical and digital media will be explored in a music graphics context.	to communicate ideas across physical and digital media. Select and use appropriate tools and techniques effectively. Experiment and refine ideas through sustained development. Make informed creative decisions based on research and feedback. Confidently analyse the work of others using visual evidence, art vocabulary, and contextual awareness. Present a finished outcome that communicates the intended concept.	information to inform creative decisions. Confidently apply techniques independently to develop a resolved portrait. Apply tools and processes with accuracy and purpose. Refine work through self evaluation, research, and feedback. Create a strong final piece that communicates ideas effectively. Being able to look closely at artwork and explain observations and what it means using evidence.	Summative - specific feedback at the end of the unit. Peer assessment - students asked to assess peer work against the Swiss design principles.
Spring 2 - Unit 3: Branding and logo design.	A short project working to the constraints of a design brief focussing on logo design.	Understanding and responding to a design brief with clear purpose. Developing visual ideas through sketching, experimentation, and iterations. Using typography and simple graphic forms to communicate meaning effectively. Applying basic principles of logo design.	Understand how logos communicate meaning through simplicity, symbolism, and visual hierarchy. Know how shape, and colour influence brand identity and audience perception. Be aware of how design constraints (briefs, audience, purpose) shape creative decision-making. Develop and refine ideas through iterative design processes.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class. Summative - specific feedback at the end of the unit.

		Selecting and refining ideas based on feedback and evaluation. Using appropriate tools and techniques (hand-rendered and digital) to produce outcomes. Presenting a resolved design that communicates a clear brand identity or concept	Understand how professional designers structure visual communication to ensure clarity.	
Summer 1 - Introduction to the Personal Investigation and Related Study.	Students investigate possible themes and undertake initial research. Related Study to be started.	Research and gather relevant visual and contextual information from a range of sources. Identify and explore potential themes to inform project direction. Analyse existing graphic design work using formal visual language. Record, organise, and present research to support creative development. Make connections between research findings and developing design ideas. Select and begin analysis of appropriate artists/designers for the Related Study.	Identify and develop meaningful themes that shape clear creative direction. Make informed, reflective connections between research, context, and emerging ideas. Select, investigate, and critically evaluate relevant practitioners to support a focused Related Study.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class. Summative - when draft essay completed and final version.
Summer 2 - Related Study (essay element of the course)	Finalise essay and present creatively. Ensure initial research stages of concepts and	Sustain and refine written investigation to produce a coherent, resolved essay. Select and use appropriate visual and written formats to present work creatively.	Communicate ideas with clarity, precision, and structured critical thinking. Integrate research, analysis, and personal interpretation into a resolved written essay.	Synoptic - holistic view against all 4 objectives.

	themes are complete.			
Year 13				
Autumn 1 - Continue practical portfolio - Personal Investigation.	Artist research (3 at least).	Independently research, select, and evaluate relevant artists/ designers to inform project direction. Critically analyse artworks using formal language and contextual understanding. Record and organise research clearly to support sustained idea development. Make purposeful links between artists' work and personal ideas or intentions. Develop informed visual responses inspired by research and analysis. Demonstrate growing understanding of how context, purpose, and audience influence outcomes. Refine ideas through reflection, comparison, and ongoing evaluation of sources.	Understand how artists use formal elements and techniques to communicate meaning and ideas. Show awareness of how historical, cultural, and personal contexts influence artistic practice and outcomes. Know how to interpret and evaluate artworks using critical analysis rather than description alone. Understand how research can directly inform, shape, and strengthen personal designs.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.
Autumn 2 - Idea development stage of the Personal Investigation.	At least 3 ideas/approaches to be explored and recorded effectively.	Begin structured idea generation in response to a theme or brief. Generate and develop a range of visual ideas in response to a design brief.	Develop and refine ideas through sustained experimentation. Independently refine work using feedback and evaluation. Awareness of how research helps guide design decisions.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class. Synoptic - holistic view against all 4 objectives.

		Experimentation of composition, typography, imagery, and layout to explore possibilities. Refine and improve ideas through iterative design and feedback. Explore and evaluate ideas against audience, purpose, and the effectiveness of visual communication.		
Spring 1 - Creating final outcomes for the Personal Investigation	CW - hand in 31st January. Exam paper released 1st February - Students to research their chosen theme and explore related practitioners.	Refine and resolve design ideas into a final outcome. Apply appropriate tools, materials, and digital processes with control and accuracy. Use the key design principles effectively to communicate meaning through design. Make informed design decisions to improve work further. Produce work that responds to a brief, audience, and intended purpose.	Produce professional-quality outcomes that communicate a purposeful design. Demonstrate a high level of skill when working with materials, tools, and digital processes. Make independent design decisions that enhance meaning and impact of designs. Ensure outcomes are fully aligned with the requirements of the design brief. Refine and evaluate work to achieve a high quality outcome.	Synoptic - holistic view against all 4 objectives. Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.
Spring 2 - Exam prep time.	Experimentation on stages of exam prep, plus idea development.	Begin structured idea generation in response to a set theme from the exam board. Generate and develop a range of visual ideas in response to set themes.	Develop and refine ideas through sustained experimentation. Independently refine work using feedback and evaluation. Awareness of how research helps guide design decisions.	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.

		Experimentation of composition, typography, imagery, and layout to explore possibilities. Refine and improve ideas through iterative design and feedback. Explore and evaluate ideas against audience, purpose, and the effectiveness of visual communication.		
Summer 1 - Exam prep time.	Continue exam preparations and idea development. Complete the 15 hour exam (normally scheduled for a week after Easter break).	Same as above	Same as above	Formative - Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class. Synoptic - holistic view against all 4 objectives.
Summer 2 - Course completed on 31st May.	Preparation for moderation.	Organise and present work clearly to show the design process from research to final outcome.	Select and sequence work to highlight progression, experimentation, and resolution of ideas. Ensure presentation fully aligns with assessment objectives and clearly evidences high-level achievement.	NEA scores shared with students.

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Formative	To improve and guide learning. Timely feedback that identifies strengths and gaps in knowledge.	Provided continuously throughout lessons and through fortnightly 1:1 tutorials in class.

Summative	To evaluate the success of outcomes against the assessment criteria.	At the end of each unit.
Synoptic	Holistic feedback that encourages and supports students to make connections between the 4 assessment objectives.	Fortnightly 1:1 tutorials. Provided consistently through conversations in the classroom.