

# MA in Design History and Material Culture

## AD456

### PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Programme title</b>	MA in Design History and Material Culture	<b>School</b>	School of Visual Culture
<b>Resulting awards</b>	MA in Design History and Material Culture Graduate Diploma in Design History & Material Culture (exit qualification only) Graduate Certificate in Design History & Material Culture (exit qualification only)	<b>Head of School</b>	Professor David Crowley
<b>Level</b>	9	<b>ECTS credits<sup>1</sup></b>	90
<b>University award</b>	Master's Degree (Major Award) (taught)	<b>Programme type</b>	Postgraduate degree delivered full-time over 12 months and part-time over two calendar years
<b>Programme Co-ordinator</b>	Dr Lisa Godson	<b>External Examiner</b>	Professor Victoria Kelley, University of the Creative Arts, England, UK
<b>Programme team</b>	Dr R O'Dwyer, Dr Lisa Godson, Hilary O Kelly, David Crowley, Dr Anna Moran, Dr Jye O'Sullivan		

## 1. Programme Aims and Objectives: Purpose Vision and Values

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### Background

The MA Design History & Material Culture (DHMC) was established in 2001 as the MA History of Design and Applied Arts. It was reconfigured in 2005 into a 12-month full time / 24-month part time programme to be delivered on 2 days per week (full time) and 1 day per week (part time) and was, in 2006, renamed the MA DHMC.

In 2019 the programme underwent a significant review and new modules were introduced. These changes were made to reflect the profile and needs of applicants to the programme. Relatively few students come to the programme with an undergraduate degree in the History of Design or Visual Culture. Instead, they come from a wide range of backgrounds – including art and design practice, architecture, art history, history, archaeology, sociology and economics – and so often used to

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<sup>1</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, where 60 ECTS credits equate to the workload of a full-time academic year

develop new skills and knowledge. With many graduates of the programme going on to pursue employment in the areas of lecturing, curatorship, public programming and museum education or pursuing doctoral study, the revisions have also been made to enhance these career and scholarly opportunities.

The programme has long standing and very productive relations with institutions in Dublin including the National Museum, the Little Museum, the Irish Architecture Foundation, etc. These public-facing institutions have supported student projects including publications and exhibitions. In 2019 new modules were introduced which recognise these relations and put a strong emphasis on the development of skills on which professional practice in these settings depends (e.g. curating, programming, etc.). In 2020 NCAD signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Museum of Ireland to develop mutual research, teaching and public engagement interests. MA Design History & Material Culture plays a central role in this partnership.

Since 2022, the programme has only run in a part time mode and students registered on the programme will not have the opportunity to transfer to full time mode of study. Nevertheless, this document maps full time and part time modes as these reflect possible modes of study in future years.

The MA DHMC is mainly comprised of modules delivered specifically for the DHMC programme. Nevertheless, some modules were introduced in 2019 which offer choice (i.e. opportunities to choose between classes) and for students to take selected modules offered by other MA programmes at NCAD. These options will allow students to combine aspects of design practice within their DHMC studies (namely a 5 credit module entitled 'Design for Change'). It will also allow for students on the Art and Contemporary World MA programme to elect to take modules on the DHMC MA programme and vice versa.

In 2019-20, options were introduced that allow students – those who so wish – to develop a specialist interest. These fields have been identified as 'Dress and Fashion History', 'Material Culture Studies', and 'Architecture and Interiors'. When a student chooses to take all the modules in one specialist field including the thesis, they will have undertaken 50 credits in that field. That specialism will be identified in the name award of the degree – for instance, *MA Design History and Material Culture with a specialisation in Dress and Fashion History*.

The central aim of the programme remains unchanged – namely to focus scholarly attention to the study of design and material culture from c. 1700 to the present day. This programme is unique nationally in addressing this subject area – history of design and material culture – and it is unique internationally in addressing a specifically Irish context. 'Design' and 'material culture' are approached very broadly so they might be objects used in daily life, architecture, publications, sites, locations, landscapes, mass produced or handmade, old or new, little known or very familiar – anything which can be considered materially. Of particular interest are the relationships which exist between people and objects, the practices which surround how they are designed (or not), produced, interacted with, collected or disposed of.

The MA DHMC draws on the wide ranging and internationally recognized expertise of its staff members in the areas of architectural history, dress history and Irish material culture. It also continues to put a high emphasis on original research. One of the major achievements of graduates

of the programme has been to produce prize-winning work of a publishable quality, particularly in terms of Irish design history and material culture and to go on to undertake doctoral study.

## 2. Programme Outcomes

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On successful completion of the programme, students will:

- Have developed a sophisticated and systematic understanding of design history and material culture with particular reference to Irish design and material culture of the modern period, its critical contexts, and the research processes appropriate to the study of field.
- Have acquired the skills and experience to undertake original research, using primary sources and critical concepts.
- Have developed a set of critical and conceptual tools necessary for the academic study of design and material culture in different fields and settings.
- Have applied their research and analytical skills in a number of contexts that include scholarly writing, forms of popular expression such as journalism, and exhibitions.
- Have developed high level writing and editing skills which will be useful in a number of professional and academic contexts.
- Understand the professional contexts in which design historical scholarship and skills are employed, not least by working with professionals in the museum, galleries and/or arts sectors in Ireland during their studies on the programme.

Understanding the professional and institutional needs and challenges in these settings, graduates will have many of the skills and understanding to pursue a successful career in the arts.

## 3. Stage Outcomes

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On successful completion of 30 credits, students will be able to:

- Conduct high levels of object analysis by identifying and researching appropriate primary sources and deploying suitable critical concepts.
- Synthesise different kinds of sources (primary and secondary).
- Plan, research and write a complex, long-form study.
- Critique the scholarship of others and the effects of historiography.

On successful completion of 60 credits, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a strong understanding of different historical periods in the History of Design, particularly in the Irish context.
- Express critical views and understanding of key issues in contemporary design practice.

- Further develop competencies in writing about design and material culture, and writing as practice, particularly with reference to the range of different styles of writing which can be employed.
- Produce a thorough research proposal for a scheme of research, analysis and writing which will demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate forms, methods and concepts.
- Demonstrate competencies in delivering presentations through a work-in-progress presentation based on the student's proposed thesis subject.

#### 4. Admission Requirements

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BA Hons (2:2 and above) in a related discipline. An appropriate level of professional practice and/or prior learning in a relevant field will also be taken into consideration.

The application procedure demands that applicants submit a sample of writing, together with a statement of interest in the programme. In addition, some applicants are interviewed.

#### 5. Further Educational Opportunities

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The MA is a well-regarded postgraduate qualification which equips students with many of the skills and understanding required in professional life. It is also a good preparation for a research degree. A number of MA DHMC graduates have gone on to doctoral study in NCAD and elsewhere. In 2018, for instance, two former graduates of the programme with Irish Research Council funding successfully defended PhD theses. Other DHMC graduates have received institutional PhD funding provided by universities such as the Kingston University (UK), NUI Maynooth and University of Ulster.

#### 6. Careers and skills

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The programme does not have a vocational focus but sets out to equip its graduates with a range of skills and understanding that has application in many professional roles. DHMC graduates enjoy successful careers as journalists, academics, artists and designers and museum professionals.

#### 7. Teaching and Learning Methodologies

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The programme provides a broad research-led approach to the study of design history and material culture. The following teaching and learning methodologies are used:

**Seminars:** The seminars have a well-defined focus, clearly related to the module aims and outcomes. Group discussions develop organically within the seminars, facilitating the development of peer learning, communication skills, critical analysis and self-reflection. Seminars are based around key readings which the students read in advance.

**Tutorials:** The purpose of the tutorial is to provide students with an opportunity to discuss their work and progress with tutors. The aim of tutorials is to help students in the process of making choices and decisions in progressing development of their practical and academic project work.

Student initiated projects are shaped, directed and managed through on-going dialogue with the supervisor.

**Lectures from visiting speakers:** Practitioners and scholars are invited to present work, engage in discussions and debate, and to talk about aspects of research practice with the student cohort. In 2018, the programme organized an international 2-day conference in partnership with the National Museum of Ireland on the past and future of national museums.

**External Visits and Study Trips:** External visits to museums for curator's talks and object handling sessions, together with attendance at conferences / symposia are recurring features of the learning experience. Typically, the programme makes a study visit to London each spring.

## 8. Methods of Assessment

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All work is assessed against criteria published by NCAD. Moreover, each module descriptor specifies particular forms of work and the key characteristics / achievements which are being assessed in any case. Key terms are outlined below:

**Class Presentation:** Students make short presentations as a normal part of the modules. As part of the submission, students are required to make available a copy of their presentation materials to the assessment team. Such presentations allow the student to demonstrate communication skills in relation to discussing design and material culture and the ability to use visual materials in the context of such discussion.

**Research Proposal:** Research proposals are required to be clearly structured and should include an abstract, a bibliography, and a statement of method. The proposal should include material indicating the research relevance of the topic. The preparation of a research proposal demonstrates an understanding of the research methodologies, the use of appropriate sources and a critical framework pertinent to the subject.

**Essay:** Essays are required to be clearly structured and should include a bibliography. Essay submission should conform to the standard style sheet requirements of research thesis. Essays should be submitted in hard copy. Written assignments demonstrate the acquisition of research techniques, understanding of key movements and key concepts, and skills in object analysis. They also expose the student's skills in writing and structuring assignments, using primary and secondary sources, and articulating an argument which is argued throughout the essay.

Other writing tasks may be set in order to develop a broad range of writing skills. They may include exhibition labels and panels, polemics and other formats. In these cases, clear guidance will be given to students about the nature of the text to be produced.

**Research Dissertation:** Typically, this is a written dissertation of 15-18,000 words in length. The dissertation facilitates the demonstration of research skills acquired, the ability to integrate a range of critical and empirical skills in a cohesive project and to demonstrate skills, techniques and knowledge developed during trimesters 1 and 2. This piece of work is double-marked and may be read by the external examiner.

**Peer learning and assessment** is employed in a number of modules. For instance, students are occasionally required to 'crit' each other's work. A 'crit' is an open discussion of the merits and demerits of student work against explicit criteria. Students participating in a crit are expected to

give constructive feedback about other students' work. In the case of group work, students are required to engage in forms of self- and group-assessment. In this way, they are asked to reflect critically on their own contribution to group tasks.

**Written feedback** is supplied for all work which is submitted for assessment.

## 9. Programme Review and Evaluation

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### **Programme and modular review processes**

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at NCAD. We encourage all students to communicate their concerns and their observations about their study to members of staff so that any changes can be made in a timely manner.

About two-thirds of the way through the year, a student forum will be convened to gather students' comments about their study and the delivery of the programme. In addition, at the end of trimester 2, students have the opportunity to complete an online evaluation of their study and experience at NCAD. These evaluation events are important to current and future students, to ensure we can enhance the delivery of programmes at NCAD.

In addition, you are invited to discuss your experience on the module with your lecturers at any point during the year. You can also relay your comments to the class student representative who will communicate your comments to the staff.

### **College-wide quality review processes**

A periodic review of this programme will be carried out in c. 2026.

## 10. Modular Provision

The modular structure has been employed to allow greater specialisation after the first trimester of the full and part-time modes. By this point, students have been introduced to key questions and methods in the field. By making active choices in modules PGVC1010, PGVC1011, PGVC1020 students can achieve a notable degree of specialisation (see comments about named award above). Particular emphasis is placed on the thesis. A long format piece of work which requires critical engagement with primary and secondary sources, students are expected to demonstrate many of the research and analytical skills which have been taught on the programme in the final thesis.

### Part-time Mode

Module Code and Name	Credits	Core or Option	Year	Trimester
PGVC1018 Key Concepts and Sources	10	Core	1	1
PGVC1026 Theorising Design	5	Core	1	1
PGVC1022 Design, Display and Exhibition	10	Core	1	2
PGVC1020 Specialist Studies	5	Option	1	2
PGVC1008 Situations 3: Elective Seminar Options	5	Option	1 or 2	2
PGVC1009 Situations 4: Elective Seminar Options	5	Option	1 or 2	2
PGDES1020 Design for Change	5	Option	1 or 2	2
PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices	5	Core	2	1
PGVC1011 Futures	5	Option	2	1
PGVC1021 Irish Design and Material Culture	5	Core	2	1
PGVC1027 Research Design	5	Core	2	2
PGVC1010 Design Mediation	5	Option	2	2
PGVC1028 Issues in Contemporary Crafts	5	Core	2	2
PGVC1024 Thesis	30	Core	2	3

## 11. Programme Structure

The programme is designed to be offered in two modes:

- i. full-time with two full days of teaching each week
- ii. part-time with one full day of teaching each week.

As indicated above, the programme is currently only offered in part-time mode.

### PT mode (24 months)

<b>Trimester 1 (Autumn)</b>		
PGVC1018 Key Concepts and Sources 10 credits	PGVC1026 Theorising Design 5 credits	
<b>Trimester 2 (Spring)</b>		
PGVC1022 Design Display and Exhibition 10 credits	PGVC1008 Situations 3 OR PGVC1009 Situations 4 OR PGVC1020 Specialist Studies OR PGDES1020 Design for Change 5 credits	
<b>Trimester 4 (Autumn)</b>		
PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices 5 credits	PGVC1011 Futures 5 credits	PGVC1021 Irish Design & Material Culture 5 credits
<b>Trimester 5 (Spring)</b>		
PGVC1027 Research Design 5 Credits	Select one not already completed: PGVC1010 Design Mediation OR PGVC1008 Situations 3 OR PGVC1009 Situations 4 OR PGDES1020 Design for Change 5 credits	PGVC1028 Issues in Contemporary Craft 5 credits
<b>Trimester 6 (Summer)</b>		
PGVC1024 Thesis 30 credits		



### Fulltime Mode (12 Months) – not currently offered

Trimester 1				
PGVC1018 Key Concepts and Sources 10 credits	PGVC1026 Theorising Design 5 credits	PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices 5 credits	PGVC1021 Irish Design & Material Culture 5 credits	PGVC1011 Futures 5 credits
Trimester 2				
PGVC1022 Design Display and Exhibition 10 credits	PGVC1020 Specialist Studies 5 credits	PGVC1028 Issues in Contemporary Craft 5 credits	PGVC1027 Research Design 5 credits	PGVC1010 Design Mediation OR PGVC1008 Situations 3 OR PGVC1009 Situations 4 OR PGDES1020 Design for Change 5 credits
Trimester 3				
PGVC1024 Thesis 30 credits				

## 12. Exit Points and Credit Requirements

Students can exit the programme at three points after successfully completing the work demanded by particular modules. These exit points are as follows.

### Graduate Certificate in Design History & Material Culture

Students who have studied fulltime and exit the programme on successful completion of the following modules (30 credits) can submit for the award of a Graduate Certificate in Design History & Material Culture:

Module	Credits
PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices	5
PGVC1011 Futures	5
PGVC1018 Key Concepts & Sources	10
PGVC1026 Theorising Design	5
PGVC1021 Irish Design & Material Culture	5

Students who have studied parttime and exit the programme on successful completion of the following modules (30 credits) can submit for the award of a Graduate Certificate in Design History & Material Culture:

<b>Module</b>	<b>Credits</b>
PGVC1018 Key Concepts & Sources	10
PGVC1026 Theorising Design	5
PGVC1020 Specialist Studies (or equivalent modules offered as options)	5
PGVC1022 Design, Display & Exhibition	10

### **Graduate Diploma in Design History & Material Culture**

Students who have studied parttime or fulltime and exit the programme on successful completion of the following modules (60 credits) can submit for the award of a Graduate Diploma in Design History & Material Culture:

<b>Module</b>	<b>Credits</b>
PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices	5
PGVC1010 Design Mediation (or equivalent modules offered as options)	5
PGVC1011 Futures	5
PGVC1018 Key Concepts & Sources	10
PGVC1026 Theorising Design	5
PGVC1020 Specialist Studies (or equivalent modules offered as options)	5
PGVC1021 Irish Design & Material Culture	5
PGVC1022 Design, Display & Exhibition	10
PGVC1027 Research Design	5
PGVC1028 Issues in Contemporary Craft	5

### **MA in Design History & Material Culture**

Students who have studied parttime or fulltime and exit on successful completion of the required core, option and elective modules prescribed in this document (90 credits) can submit for the award of a Master of Arts in Design History & Material Culture.

#### **Specialisms**

Students who take all the modules which have been identified as constituting a specialism, namely PGVC1010 Design Mediation or PGVC1020 Specialist Studies), and who develop key relevant research skills (PGVC1023 Research Design) and write a dissertation in a closely related subject (PGVC1024 Thesis) will graduate with a named award that identifies that specialisation. For instance:

MA Design History and Material Culture with a specialism in Dress and Fashion History.

### 13. Final Award Calculation

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Students awarded the MA Design History and Material Culture will have completed 90 credits. The final grade will be calculated using the credits from all modules completed in the programme.

### 14. Resources

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#### Staffing

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Teaching Staff	Dr Lisa Godson	Programme leader
	Dr Anna Moran	Lecturer
	Hilary O’Kelly	Lecturer
	Dr Rachel O’Dwyer	Lecturer
	Dr Jye O’Sullivan	Lecturer
	David Crowley	Lecturer
Administrative Staff	Neasa Travers	School Secretary

#### Space

Teaching takes place in various School of Visual Culture seminar rooms and classrooms on the Thomas Street Campus.

#### Facilities

No special facilities are attached the programme. Students make extensive use of College facilities such as the library and NIVAL. All modules are supported by a range of digital resources delivered via Canvas.

**For further information on this programme,  
contact Dr Lisa Godson [godsonl@staff.ncad.ie](mailto:godsonl@staff.ncad.ie)**