



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Service Design
Award:	MA
Qualification Framework Level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Design
Campus location(s):	Kensington
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to	2023-24

2. Programme Philosophy

Service Design is the application of human-centred design methods to complex systems in order to create pragmatic and visionary services that improve and transform human experiences and outcomes.

The Service Design programme equips you with the tools to provide human insight, create and prototype new futures and an understanding of complex systems to become an effective changemaker in the modern world. You will develop your practice through exploration of service design theory, intellectual critique and experience of working in the real contexts of live projects.

The aim of the Service Design programme is to inspire and equip students from a broad range of design and innovation backgrounds to apply design thinking methodologies in order to answer the challenges of technological, social and environmental futures in commercial, social and public contexts. Using a human-centric approach to systems, technology and societal trends, the programme delivers the practical tools, the intellectual frameworks and the professional practice required to deliver transformational change.

The programme is built on an academic foundation of design methodologies and principles that are applied to real scenarios through collaborations with organisations working in enterprise, social and public roles who bring real issues and opportunities that respond to current and future disruption or innovation. Collaborating in teams, you will move through the design process of deep research, issue reframing, creative concept generation, prototyping and user testing you will understand and experience how design tools enable you to imagine and then deliver sustainable solutions.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

- Develop service designers who can apply human-centred design methodologies to influence and transform complex systems to deliver positive impact and innovative business and social outcomes;
- Engage and create responses to changes and trends in technological, societal and business contexts;
- Operate in the culture and systems of organisational change;
- Imagine and deliver new services and experiences;
- Collaborate and lead transformational change.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Develop visionary, responsible, and deliverable service solutions to the challenges and opportunities of society. You will demonstrate consideration of the environment and use of technology based on empathy and systems thinking and develop both strategic interventions to deliver measurable impact;
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles and methods of service design and apply them effectively to your own practice and the evolving discipline of service design;
- Demonstrate a strategic approach to service experiences and the orchestration of touchpoints and systems to deliver excellent service experiences;
- Demonstrate understanding of the societal, ethical, environmental and business context for

- any service innovation and take these into account in your overall professional practice;
- Define your professional identity through self-reflection and an understanding of how service design practice and the profession create value for industry, the public sector, and the users and communities they serve.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Service Design Foundation Methods and Materials (45 credits)	Grand Challenge (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	School-wide elective (15 credits)	
	Advanced Service Design Methods (15 credits)	
AcrossRCA (30 credits)		

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Service Design Foundation Methods and Materials	1	45	Core
Advanced Service Design Methods	2	15	Core
School Elective	2	15	Core
Grand Challenge (School-wide unit)	2	15	Core
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)	1 & 2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

The first two terms will take you from a foundation of the tools and methodologies through to advanced techniques and management skills which are applied through projects leading to the Independent Research Project in the third term.

Term 1: *Service Design Foundation Methods and Materials* encompasses the whole term and consists of a series of lectures on the methods and materials of service design accompanied by 3 project sprints in which these methods are applied.

You will develop an understanding of core design processes and skills and demonstrate learning from the taught aspect of the programme through practical exercises that are applied to a live student project. The initial project develops a theoretical and practical understanding of the ecosystems of services, develops skills in research, design sprints and the interaction between human, technology and systems.

- You will take part in a short “Icebreaker” project to deconstruct a service you are familiar with.
- A subsequent project explores how services are delivered through the “Future of Work”. This project assesses your ability to explore and apply foundation methods and materials in a live project environment.
- The second half of the term is a project in collaboration with external organisations around a set of “Challenge Labs” exploring different areas of social, business and technological challenges. These typically include challenges around healthcare, technology ethics, business services, social impact and sustainability.

In Term 2 you will receive teaching in *Advanced Service Design Methods*, looking at the role of the service designer in developing transformational programmes to reframe projects. You will develop your projects to a prototype level to validate and iterate your service concept. You will explore delivery across channels including the human and ethical issues of emerging technology platforms such as AI.

Term 3 is a self-directed Independent Research Project working in one of several Challenge Labs collaborating with external organisations who bring active projects and challenges. You will develop strategic visions with practical deliverable design interventions to create new services and systems. This project will be the core of the public output of the programme and contribute powerfully to public discourse on the value and suitability of the services and interactions we experience.

The project will be agreed in **Term 2** and an associated partner engaged. The project will develop innovative, transformational outcomes based on research, creativity and prototyping.

You will submit outputs that are experiential and provide a proof of concept for the service proposition, service experience or future vision.

In **term 2** all School of Design students will participate in the Grand Challenge, School-wide unit. The aim of this unit is to connect and challenge all students in the School through the introduction of a ‘wicked’ design problem that requires a cross disciplinary approach to problem solving involving an external international scientific or industry partner (or both). This unit and lecture series has been hugely successful in connecting and disrupting disciplines, people, philosophies and approaches to design thinking whilst providing our student body with very unique networking opportunities.

Across **terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support you to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing you together to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

5. How will I learn?

The learning experience is through a series of lectures covering the theoretical principles and practical examples of the 3 core units with intensive team-based projects working across the "Challenge Labs". Projects will collaborate closely with external organisations.

Project work is guided by regular sessions with personal tutors who work with individuals and teams throughout the project. Midpoint reviews of project presentations describing relevant research, hypothesis and potential outcomes are held with tutors and staff and support project progress to the end of project submission and assessment. You will also have the opportunity to present your project to the Challenge Lab organisation you are working with.

Throughout the programme a range of seminars will be run on topics including the impact and future direction of service design, human and digital interactions, environmental impact, ethics of service design, total system design and beauty and emotion in service experiences.

A public event is held towards the end of the IRP and final submissions will be shared online.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found [here](#). Please familiarise yourself with these.

Unit assessment

Your progress through the programme will be assessed in presentations and reviews at the conclusion of each project and term. You will receive a rating according to your individual role inside your project team. You will receive formal feedback and advice on further development within 2 weeks of the project review.

Assessment will be made against a set of criteria including:

- Quality and depth of research, resulting in new learning and insight;
- Assessment of issues and opportunities;
- Creative solution generation – range and depth;
- Analysis of final solution – quality of service blueprint, systems and operation design, social and environmental impact assessment;
- Quality and effectiveness of prototyping - ability to test and validate hypothesis;
- Experiential outcomes, validated with end users.

7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an MA degree you need to gain 180 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units. If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit. If you are successful at resit you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a programme of at

least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full programme of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Student Visa visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Whilst there are still spaces available, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. If there is no vacancy for a subsequent successful applicant, the candidate will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available.

Programme-specific requirements

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements.