Programme Specification

Award and title: MA Virtual and Augmented Reality

School:	School of the Arts
Subject area:	Design
Entry from academic year:	September
in the month(s) of	2025-26
Awarding institution:	York St John University
Teaching institution:	York St John University
Delivery location:	York St John University
Programme/s accredited by:	Not applicable
Exit awards:	Postgraduate Certificate Design Postgraduate Diploma: MA Virtual and Augmented Reality
UCAS code / GTTR / other:	Not applicable
Joint Honours combinations:	Not applicable
QAA subject benchmark statement(s):	Art and Design February 2017 Master's degree characteristics September 2020
Mode/s of study:	Postgraduate periods of study[1] for full time
Language of study:	English
Paired with Foundation Year	No
Study abroad opportunities:	No
Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:	No

Introduction and special features

Virtual and augmented reality have transcended the gaming and entertainment industries, offering transformative applications across education, healthcare, design, and digital communication. With the rise of wearable technologies and the ability to augment virtual objects over reality, these innovations present limitless possibilities for the future of interaction and immersive experiences.

This programme empowers you to develop a unique perspective and personal voice, exploring a range of design methodologies, approaches, and strategies to inform your creative practice. By engaging with the latest developments in design thinking, you will establish a strong foundation in virtual and augmented reality, gaining a deeper appreciation of how these technologies are reshaping the way we learn, communicate, and engage with digital environments.

What sets MA Virtual and Augmented Reality apart is its interdisciplinary approach. The programme interconnects design thinking, entrepreneurship, the circular economy, and the fourth industrial revolution, equipping you with the knowledge to make informed design decisions and apply them to your own projects.

This programme is ideal for those looking to explore the cutting edge of immersive technologies, blending creativity with technical expertise to shape the future of digital experiences.

Who Should Apply?

This programme welcomes applicants from diverse backgrounds, including graphic design, fine art, animation, games design, illustration, interiors and product design. Whether you seek to refine your existing skills or transition into the field of graphic design, this programme offers a supportive and interdisciplinary environment that promotes collaboration and innovation. We also encourage creative thinkers from other disciplines to apply, as the programme values diverse perspectives and cross-disciplinary practices.

Industry Engagement & Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is embedded throughout the programme, offering structured opportunities to engage with real-world design challenges. Developed in collaboration with our industry contacts, these experiences mirror professional practices and provide valuable insights into industry methodologies. Throughout your studies, your project direction may lead to a placement or live brief working in collaboration with regional and national design agencies and organisations.

The *Innovation Project* module provides a platform for experimentation, allowing you to develop work in response to industry-driven research and insights. You also have the opportunity to collaborate with an industry partner on a project of your choice, gaining real-world experience and professional connections. In the *Major Project module*, you can tailor your studies to align with your aspirations by choosing either a theoretical or practical route. Throughout this process, you will receive ongoing professional feedback, participate in critique sessions, and refine your work through portfolio reviews. These pathways are designed to support your transition into industry practice or provide a strong foundation for further academic pursuits, such as undertaking a PhD.

By joining MA Virtual and Augmented Reality, you will immerse yourself in a dynamic learning environment that prepares you to navigate and shape the evolving landscape of contemporary design

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for postgraduate study. In addition, you must:

- Demonstrate examples of your own practice.
- Be interviewed, either in person or online.

To demonstrate you have adequate practical skills for this programme, you will be interviewed to show examples of your own practice. Non-traditional entrants, who may have a successful professional career but may not have UG qualifications, will also be interviewed

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of Recognition of prior learning (RPL). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The MA Virtual and Augmented Reality programme aims to:

1. Develop the necessary design and technical skills to understand, interpret and design digital and real-life experiences.
2. Provide multiple opportunities to develop methodologies and techniques for diverse audiences.
3. Provide industry-focused experiences in multi-disciplinary and practice-based talks/lectures and workshops.
4. Create a framework for academic discussion, personal practice and development, allowing you to engage with problems and insights at the forefront of interaction design.

5. Develop a comprehensive understanding of immersive environments and to study the theoretical, ethical, and professional contexts in which your practice is situated.

6. Equip you with critical knowledge, abilities, and methods to become an autonomous and self-directed practitioner.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

7.1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of the ethical considerations and the social impact of emerging technologies.

7.2 Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and application of the principles and methods of research associated with Virtual and Augmented Reality

7.3 Critically appraise design work to make modifications and propose improvements.

7.4 Investigate; critically evaluate virtual and augmented reality experiences in commercial, applied and creative contexts

7.5 Identify, experiment and analyse materials and processes in order to translate ideas into outcomes

7.6 Demonstrate originality and self-direction in problem solving, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks in a professional/industry context.

These aims and outcomes have been developed by mapping onto the QAA master's characteristics, the FHEQ level 7 guidelines and York St John graduate attributes.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
DES7025M	7	1	Design Thinking	30	C	x
DES70**M	7	1	Technological Revolution	30	C	x
DES7037M	7	2	Immersive Design	30	C	NC
DES7038M	7	2	Innovation Project: Virtual and Augmented Reality	30	C	x
DES7039M	7	3	Major Project: Virtual and Augmented Reality	60	C	NC

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensable. A non-compensable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level with a mark of 50 to progress.

In the first semester, you will undertake a 30-credit **Design Thinking module** over six weeks of scheduled contact time. This module encourages you to approach design with a human-centered perspective, emphasizing problem-solving through an understanding of human needs. You will explore a range of design methodologies and research strategies, fostering collaboration across postgraduate disciplines to create a dynamic community for knowledge exchange. Following this, you will engage in the **Technological Revolution module**, also spanning six weeks. This module examines advancements in technology and the circular economy, exploring how the creative industries are evolving to shape their own futures. The combination of these two modules provides you with a strong foundation in user-centered design, helping to establish your own creative direction.

The second semester begins with a 30-credit **Immersive Design module** for six weeks. Here you will explore how XR technologies are affecting change within both commercial and educational sectors to underpin your own practice. By the end of this module, you will have constructed a comprehensive design proposal to take forward. In the following six weeks, you will undertake the **Innovation Project module**, a supervised 30-credit component that builds upon your research findings. This module allows you to refine your proposal into a conceptual framework, exploring either a practical or virtual prototype. It can be a foundation for your Major Project or a standalone research investigation. The Innovation Project also offers industry collaborations and work-related learning opportunities to enhance your professional development.

In the final semester, you will embark on the **Major Project module** (60 credits), spanning twelve weeks. This self-directed module provides the opportunity to build upon previous research and development or explore a new area of inquiry, culminating in either a theoretical or practical outcome. You will be encouraged to engage with industry professionals where relevant and produce a rigorous, meaningful body of work that reflects your creative voice.

This structured approach ensures that you gain a balance of theoretical knowledge, hands-on experience, and industry engagement, equipping you with the skills to navigate the evolving landscape of design practice.

Learning, teaching and assessment

The teaching methodology is informed by an in-depth knowledge of design pedagogy, and it incorporates a broad range of practices. We understand design as a practice-based discipline that also reflects upon itself, and we believe that this is true regardless of whether students of Design have a visual practice. We want you to understand the interactive relationship between media and processes, between ideas and issues, and between designer and consumer with attention to critical and contextual discourse.

The programme has been designed to meet the needs of both students who have just finished undergraduate programmes in the UK/EU and internationally, and returners to learning. It is concerned with ensuring that you can experience a variety of teaching and learning strategies across the modules offered. The modules are structured to facilitate successful achievement of the programme learning outcomes.

You will be provided with a range of teaching and learning strategies across the modules, which include reflective, independent, collaborative and facilitated learning. This process will be achieved through workshops, visiting speakers, field visits; work related learning, seminar discussions, supervised projects and supported VLE learning. You will receive technical supervision through a variety of different workshops to help support your academic project work.

Module feedback will be undertaken at timely points to enable effective progression into the next project, usually at the same time as a portfolio review to enable ongoing holistic assessment. Formative assessment will be employed throughout the programme through a range of tasks, projects, and presentations. Summative assessment will take a variety of forms including portfolio work, creating artefacts, presentation of visual works, research reports and case studies.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general regulations for postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- University mission and values
- University 2026 Strategy
- QAA subject benchmark statements
- Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications

Date written / revised:

Programme originally approved: