

VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN - M.F.A.

College of Communication and Information
School of Visual Communication Design
www.kent.edu/vcd

About This Program

Ready to take on leadership roles in the design industry? The M.F.A. degree in Visual Communication Design focuses on field research methods, design thinking and social innovation, augmented by a practical university teaching experience. As a graduate, you'll be able to pursue careers in design education, but you'll also stand out in the industry for your ability to solve problems from a research-based design perspective. Read more...

Contact Information

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- Connect with an Admissions Counselor: U.S. Student | International Student

Program Delivery

- **Delivery:**
 - In person
- **Location:**
 - Kent Campus

Examples of Possible Careers and Salaries*

- Brand Manager
- Creative Director
- Design Director
- Design Educator
- Design Researcher
- Design Strategist
- Digital Designer
- Multimedia Designer
- Professor of Design
- Product Designer
- Senior Designer
- User Experience Designer
- Visual Designer

Accreditation

National Association of Schools of Art and Design

* Source of occupation titles and labor data comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics'

Occupational Outlook Handbook. Data comprises projected percent change in employment over the next 10 years; nation-wide employment numbers; and the yearly median wage at which half of the workers in the occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less.

For more information about graduate admissions, visit the graduate admission website. For more information on international admissions, visit the international admission website.

Admission Requirements

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- Undergraduate degree in design or closely related program
- Minimum 2.750 undergraduate major GPA on a 4.000-point scale
- Official transcript(s)
- Résumé
- Goal statement (*starting with spring 2026 admission term, statement is no longer required*)
- Autobiographical statement (250 words) (*starting with spring 2026 admission term, statement is no longer required*)
- Statement of intent *is required starting with spring 2026 admission term* addressing the following items:
 - Prior educational and work experiences
 - Future career objectives
 - Reasons for pursuing graduate study
 - Relevance of the above three items to this M.F.A. degree
- Portfolio¹
- Three letters of recommendation
- English language proficiency - all international students must provide proof of English language proficiency (unless they meet specific exceptions to waive) by earning one of the following:²
 - Minimum 94 TOEFL iBT score
 - Minimum 7.0 IELTS score
 - Minimum 65 PTE score
 - Minimum 120 DET score

¹ For applicants without a visual communication design undergraduate degree, a portfolio may be defined as any creative, problem-solving endeavor. It may include drawing, painting, illustration, photography, web related solutions, interactions, writing or other types of solutions not listed here.

² International applicants who do not meet the above test scores may be considered for conditional admission.

Application Deadlines

- **Fall Semester**
 - Application deadline: March 1
- **Spring Semester**
 - Application deadline: October 1

All application materials (including applicable fee, transcripts, recommendation letters, etc.) submitted after these deadlines will be considered on a space-available basis.

Program Requirements

Major Requirements

Code	Title	Credit Hours
Major Requirements		
UX 60501	INTRODUCTION TO USER EXPERIENCE	3
VCD 60020	GRADUATE STUDIO IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN	3

VCD 60091	GRADUATE SEMINAR IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN	3
VCD 60094	PROFESSIONAL AND TEACHING DEVELOPMENT	3
VCD 60171	CRITICAL PRACTICES IN DESIGN RESEARCH	3
VCD 60191	ADVANCED RESEARCH	3
VCD 60200	DESIGN THEORY I: CULTURE, COMMUNITIES AND CONTEXT	3
VCD 61099	GRADUATE PORTFOLIO/GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION ¹	1
Major Elective, choose from the following:		3
VCD 60096	INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATION IN GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION	
Emerging Media and Technology (EMAT) Graduate Course (60000 level)		
User Experience (UX) Graduate Course (60000 level)		
Personal Focus Electives, choose from the following: ²		29
Illustration		
VCD 52002	EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION	
VCD 52003	ADVERTISING ILLUSTRATION	
VCD 52005	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN: THE HUMAN FIGURE	
VCD 52006	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN: ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENTS	
VCD 52007	GRAPHIC NARRATIVE	
Motion and Interaction Design		
EMAT 51000	RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN	
VCD 53007	INFORMATION DESIGN	
VCD 53101	INTERACTION DESIGN II	
VCD 54006	MOTION DESIGN I	
Typography, Identity and Environmental Graphic Design		
VCD 53002	TYPOGRAPHY II	
VCD 53003	IDENTITY SYSTEMS	
VCD 53005	INTEGRATED BRAND DESIGN	
VCD 53006	BRAND EXPERIENCES	
VCD 53060	TYPEFACE DESIGN	
VCD 56003	EXPERIMENTAL TYPOGRAPHY	
Other Topics		
VCD 50053	GLYPHIX RESEARCH LABORATORY	
VCD 53051	TYPE HIGH PRESS	
Other courses with advisor approval		
<i>Culminating Requirement</i>		
VCD 69199	M.F.A. THESIS I ³	6
Minimum Total Credit Hours:		60

¹ Successful completion of VCD 61099 is a requirement in every School of Visual Communication Design graduate program for both M.A. and M.F.A. degrees after either the first semester or 12 credit hours of course completion.

² The Personal Focus Electives are grouped according to general interest areas; however, students are not limited to one interest area. Students may take electives from other programs in consultation with their academic advisor and/or thesis advisor.

³ The thesis is a significant project or body of work done independently of other coursework. Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to conduct research or produce an original project in a discriminating and disciplined manner. The thesis topic should be one that will further the student's knowledge and ability in the specialty by demonstrating skill as a researcher or professional designer/illustrator. The outcome

should be an effort that serves as a foundation for the pursuit of independent work when the graduate program is completed. At this stage, students are expected to work in close consultation with their thesis advisor.

Graduation Requirements

Minimum Major GPA	Minimum Overall GPA
-	3.000

- The Master of Fine Arts program requires the successful completion of 60 credit hours of graduate credit and a thesis.
- The final examination is at the completion of the studio or research thesis. The final examination is the presentation and defense of the thesis and is also an examination of the graduate student's general comprehension of visual communication design. Graduate students are expected to follow the university schedule of deadlines for taking the final examination and presenting thesis materials.
- No more than one-half of a graduate student's coursework may be taken in 50000-level courses.
- Grades below C are not counted toward completion of requirements for the degree.

Program Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this program will be able to:

1. Develop leadership abilities necessary for success in the design industry or higher education.
2. Develop skills for collaborative engagement with strategic partners, team members and peers.
3. Develop deeper awareness of issues related to the cognitive, social, theoretical, cultural, technological, educational and economic contexts of design.
4. Develop understanding of design's use as a strategic tool and medium for business and social applications, through the integration of practice and research.
5. Develop enhanced comprehension of design thinking, design process and metacognition.
6. Develop capabilities in the planning, application and synthesis of field research methods and their use in design process.

Full Description

As a terminal degree, the Master of Fine Arts degree in Visual Communication Design serves students with a strong undergraduate and/or professional experience in design who wish to advance into leadership roles. Classes have been developed to create an educational experience in design highlighted by field research methods, design thinking, and social innovation, augmented by practical university teaching experience.

The M.F.A. degree allows graduates to pursue careers in design education; they also stand out in the industry for their ability to solve problems from a research-based design perspective. The program offers individualized plans of study, experiential learning, design history and research. Interdisciplinary study is encouraged.