2025

BA GRAPHIC DESIGN PROSPECTUS

Bachelor of Arts In Graphic Design (with Illustration) &
Bachelor of Arts In Graphic Design (with Communication)

Graphic Design Subject Group
School of Communication
Faculty of Humanities
North-West University
Potchefstroom Campus

Please visit **www.nwu.ac.za** to apply to the North-West University.

The NWU BA Graphic Design degree programmes are selection courses and fall under the School of Communication, within the Faculty of Humanities.

We offer two programmes that both have Graphic Design as the main focus, but supporting modules that differ. Please make sure you adhere to the selection criteria for our programmes when applying.

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN WITH ILLUSTRATION MODULES

&

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN WITH COMMUNICATION MODULES

For BA Graphic Design application & portfolio queries, please contact:
Zita.Kyster@nwu.ac.za
Colette.Lotz@nwu.ac.za

*Salvado

*Occupation:
Surrealist Painter

u   g   s,
u   g   s."

m the hallucinogenic!"

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

OUR PROGRAMMES

APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

FORMS

INTRODUCTION

....

Graphic Design addresses the physical, cultural, technological, and economic aspects of specific situations and the cognitive and social behaviours of people as they interact with information. Design is a professional craft, a strategic advantage, and a vital cultural force. Visual communication designers work in print-based design (the creation of image and text, typography, books, posters, magazines), environmental applications (exhibition and retail design, wayfinding, and signage), packaging, broadcast media (film titling and television on-air graphics), and interactive media (social platforms, websites, games, and software). Messages, objects, systems, and services created by visual communication designers create the conditions for people's experiences; they identify, interpret, inform, instruct, persuade, and entertain.

- Adapted from *AIGA 2020.*

Several enterprises, companies, design institutions, communication and printing houses appoint graphic designers and illustrators. For the entrepreneur, there are also freelancing options and the possibility of starting their own businesses.

The graphic design industry is a fast-growing, dynamic industry. Individual talent, drive and personality play a crucial role in determining the position that a qualified individual will hold in the landscape of work. The world of graphic design is one of the most stimulating and exciting fields of study into which a talented student can enter and offers numerous career opportunities.

3D concept artist & animator
Art director
Botanical illustrator
Brand manager
Character animator
Comic book artist
Concept artist
Content creator
Copywriter
Creative director
Editorial designer
Editorial illustrator
Film and TV director
Game designer
Graphic designer
Graphic novelist
Interaction designer
Motion graphics artist
Packaging designer
Pattern designer
Professional illustrator
Screenwriter
Sound designer
Storyboard illustrator
Typographer / Editorial designer
Web, app & UX designer

CAREERS
CAREERS
CAREERS
CAREERS
CAREERS

OUR STORY OUR STORY OUR STORY OUR STORY OUR STORY

Are are looking for something that will inspire you? Something to provide you with a thrilling challenge? Somewhere where you feel at home as a creative thinker and passionate maker of beautiful meaningful things? If you are artistic, naturally inquisitive, excited by creativity, enjoy solving problems, see opportunities around you, and take delight in visual communication, then you have come to the right place.

The North-West University has established itself as an institution that strives for excellence and our Graphic Design subject group aspires to provide graphic design qualifications with calibre, which continue to rank highly as four-year degrees. Our curricula are structured to develop deep thinking, professional practice, research, insight, and exceptional craft in the development of solutions that are sustainable, original and relevant. Our alumni continue to prove their merits with award-winning work and by continuing to excel in the industry as professionals.

Our academic staff are dedicated educators, mentors and facilitators, and always endeavour to lead our students' journey and development as creatives, problem-solvers and skilled technological artisans. We aim to equip our students to be suited for various work place opportunities.

We encourage students to be independent thinkers, explorers and engaged learners. Our top priority is to advance our students' unique talents and abilities, and to nurture a generation of graphic designers and creative thinkers who are not only outstanding in their craft, but who are also responsible citizens, professionals and academic leaders.

We believe that the most meaningful learning for our students takes place through experience and purposeful interaction. The creative environment at NWU Graphic Design immerses our students in a community driven by a sense of responsibility towards the discipline of visual communication, our society, and the planet through their steadfastness, hard work and passion.

We hope that you will become part of our graphic design family and proceed to make a success of your studies at our institution.

NWU Graphic Design's vision is to effectively and successfully equip students with creative skills and practical foundations, and to enable graduates to become fully rounded knowledge workers, critical and conceptual thinkers, problem-solvers, and proficient professional practitioners.

◄ *Our BA Graphic Design programs aim to achieve this vision by:*

Promoting **creativity** and **innovation** in students in the field of graphic design.

Enabling students' **continuous learning** with facilitation and adaptability.

Incorporating **exploratory, solution-driven** graphic design practices.

Developing students' **critical thinking** and **problem-solving** competencies.

Introducing **effective research methodologies** and critical analysis in the field.

Responding to **national and international** creative industries with innovation in design teaching.

Providing physical and digital learning **environments** that enable **collaboration** and enquiry.

Striving to shape graphic design graduates who are **responsible citizens**, **leaders** in their field and practice, and future researchers.

◄ *We endeavour to achieve these goals in order to:*

Serve the creative industries by preparing future graduates to become professionals who can contribute meaningful solutions, innovations and societal impact.

Instil best practices for professional graphic design and related disciplines in our future graduates in order to become leaders in the industry, characterised by progressive thinking, academic vigour and practical expertise.

Encourage and nurture inter-disciplinarity, not only within the creative industries, but also in other fields as related to our profession and fields of research.

OUR VISION
OUR VISION
OUR VISION
OUR VISION
OUR VISION

FACILITIES
FACILITIES
FACILITIES
FACILITIES
FACILITIES

On the NWU Potchefstroom campus with its many buildings, library, gardens, and bustling with vibrant students, the NWU Graphic Design group is located in Building F2. A beautiful and ancient ginkgo biloba tree gracefully welcomes visitors to our building that students have lovingly nicknamed the House of the Rising Sun. This nickname honours the personal and professional growth that each student has won through the hours, days, nights and months they have spent here, immersed in creativity and hard work.

It is equipped with assigned graphic design and illustration practical ateliers, as well as computer studios that are used for hands-on, guided, in-person teaching. Our students may use the facilities at any hour of the day, any day of the week, to complete their creative projects alongside their creative peers.

Our computer laboratories are equipped with Apple Macintosh hardware and industry standard design software suited to our design students' needs. All our registered students are granted access to software package licences as part of their course fees.

ACADEMIC QUALITY

We function within a university setting and apply only the highest academic standards. Our programme is based on an integrated approach to practice, theory and research, as well as technical acuity.

NURTURING CREATIVITY

We provide an innovative and nurturing space where students can acquire the art of intelligent reasoning, mature into accomplished practitioners and above all, develop their creative talent into meaningful design solutions.

CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY

We are a small, but committed community of creative staff and students where everyone can learn from each other and work together.

STAYING RELEVANT

We see matters differently, think differently and use our creativity to make a difference. We consistently transform our curricula according to an ever-changing industry to remain relevant and innovative.

FOCUSED GUIDANCE

With a small student body of about 100 students and our skilled and devoted staff, we guide design students individually according to their specific aptitudes and fields of interest.

FULLY ROUNDED GRADUATES

We offer a four-year degree to ensure that our students are fully rounded graduates. Our degree programmes also enable students to continue to an academic or practice driven master's degree in graphic design.

DIVERSITY & RESPECT

Whether of people or opinion, we greatly value and respect diversity.

WHY US?

If you think that studying Graphic Design with us appeals to you, answer these questions and see to how many you answer "Yes!"

Do you think about things differently, and have creative ways in which you observe and interpret the world around you?
You're Creative!

Do you want to find out how things work and always ask, "what if?", see opportunities in difficult situations and?
You're Curious!

Do you often think about what people like, want and need, carefully observing their behaviour, and try to put yourself in someone else's shoes?
You're Observant!

Do you like being challenged to solve a problem in order to make things better than they are?
You're a Problem-Solver!

Are curious, always looking for explanations, asking where things come from, where they are going, why are they this way, can we change it?
You're Inquisitive!

Do you like to frame and formulate problems, organize and work with a plan to solve it?
You're Industrious!

Do you love all kinds of information, collect and use things from your surroundings, experiences, and other people's stories?
You're Perceptive!

Do you think visually – making, diagramming, mapping, modelling, photographing, and sketching to express your thoughts and ideas?
You're a Visual Communicator!

OUR PROGRAMMES

NWU Graphic Design offers two types of graphic design degrees – *a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design with Illustration, and a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design with Communication.*

Both curricula are designed to enable you to tailor your studies to your aptitudes and aspirations.

At key points in their academic journey, students are afforded the opportunity to tailor the range of skills they are trained in so that they may conclude their degree with a personalised portfolio of work that truly reflects their aptitudes and is tailored to the field in which they wish to build a career.

Both curricula are four-year professional degrees. These degrees are honours level equivalents and enable academically-inclined graduates to continue with postgraduate studies or a master's degree.

YEAR 1

In the first year, our students build foundational graphic design and drawing skills, along with being introduced to the larger functions of communication, and the contexts within which visuals and art shape our world.

First years actively apply design basics to understand the building blocks of the graphic design profession, engaging in idea generation, technical training, and the application of design knowledge in individual projects with theory and practice. First year students in both our Graphic Design programmes complete the same introductory modules.

In the second year, our students further build on graphic design foundations, but also integrate critical thinking and problem-solving processes inherent in design. Understanding contexts, applying strategic thought, and employing creative conceptual ideation to a project is pivotal in finding design solutions that are relevant to intended audiences, whether they are for commercial, social, economic or ecological purposes.

Students develop and practise skills in design thinking as well as visualization with design software, tactile and/or digital experimentation, different media usage, and stylistic treatment. Second years also have the option to choose between ancillary modules in Illustration and History of Art, or Communication modules, determined by their aptitude toward either corporate communication, or their illustrative abilities and interest in visual culture and criticism.

YEAR 2

FOCUS: APPLYING DESIGN PROCESSES

In third year, students apply varied design practices in an accomplished and comprehensive manner. Students spend the year constructing a portfolio of practical projects, through which their critical thinking and design skills with regards to audience, strategy, conceptualisation and visual crafting is refined.

Designing for the ever-growing digital milieu requires third year students to apply their graphic design competencies to multiple forms of media. Building on the knowledge of visual communication, meaningful image-making and typographic expertise as applied to traditional formats, students additionally learn the possibilities of motion, video and sound and how user experiences are shaped through interactivity and multimodality.
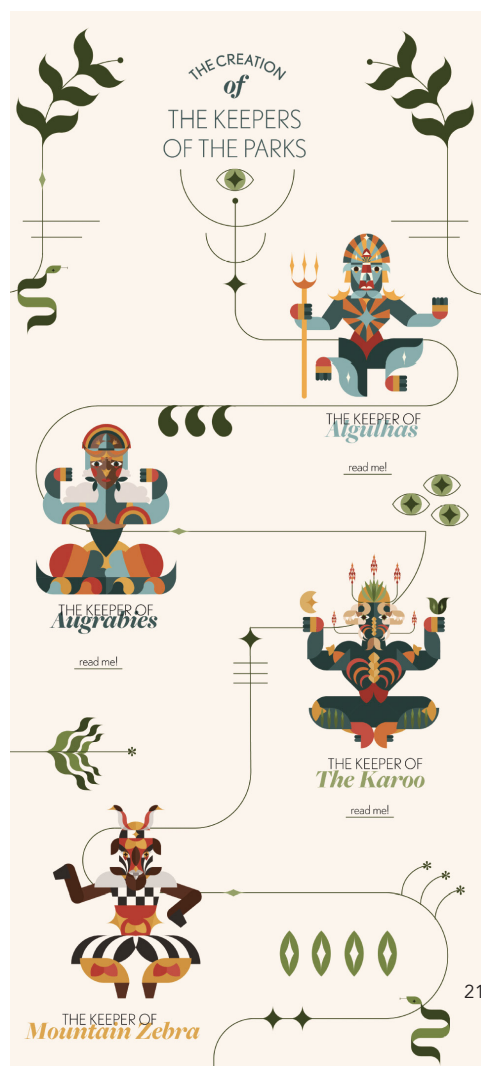

YEAR 3

FOCUS: ACCOMPLISHED DESIGN PRACTICE

YEAR 4

Design research is paramount in solving complex problems in visual communication. The fourth year is focused on deepening the understanding of research in practice, by applying practice-led and practice-based research methodologies to investigate and implement theory, technology and societal contexts to enable the design practitioner to perform responsibly, valuably and creatively.

Fourth year students receive individual guidance to advance and refine their individual practices, culminating in purposeful design solutions that are both meticulous and discerning. It prepares students for senior positions in the industry, as well as enabling academic rigor for postgraduate studies in design.

THE CREATION *of* THE KEEPERS OF THE PARKS

THE KEEPER OF *Algulhas*

read me!

THE KEEPER OF *Augrabies*

read me!

THE KEEPER OF *The Karoo*

read me!

THE KEEPER OF *Mountain Zebra*

21

BA GRAPHIC DESIGN CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

YEAR 1

Graphic Design & Illustration	Graphic Design & Communication

Graphic Design S1
Graphic Design Semester S2

Illustration S1
Illustration S2

Communication S1
Communication S2

History of Art S1
History of Art S2

Academic Literacy S1
Academic Literacy S2

In your first year, you must complete the Academic Literacy modules depending on your TAG test results. You can choose between English or Afrikaans modules.

YEAR 2

Graphic Design & Illustration	Graphic Design & Communication

Graphic Design Semester 1
Graphic Design Semester 2

Creative Advertising Theory S1

Illustration S1 Illustration S2	Communication S1 Communication S1

History of Art S2

Business Management S1

Sociology S2

Philosophy S2

YEAR 3

Graphic Design & Illustration	Graphic Design & Communication

Graphic & Multimedia Design Semester 1
Graphic & Multimedia Design Semester 2

Illustration S1 Illustration S2	Communication S1 Communication S2 Communication S2

History of Art S1 History of Art S2	Business Marketing S2

Philosophy S1

YEAR 4

Graphic Design & Illustration	Graphic Design & Communication

Graphic & Multimedia Design Semester 1
Graphic & Multimedia Design Semester 2

Illustration Year Module	Communication S1 Communication S2 Communication S2

History of Art Year Module

Both our BA Graphic Design curricula are selection programmes in order to provide our students with quality training and suitable access to the facilities offered. We accept a limited number of first year students and the selection of successful candidates is determined by a three-phase process.

A prospective student must complete all three phases successfully in order to be accepted into the Graphic Design programmes.

Phase 1
Follow the NWU University Admission & Application procedure.

Phase 2
Send us your Graphic Design Portfolio for selection.

Phase 3
Come for an interview and a set of skills test workshops, if you are invited.

APPLICATION & SELECTION

PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1
PHASE 1

UNIVERSITY ADMISSION

The NWU University Admission procedure takes place *before* the BA Graphic Design selection process.

Acceptance into either of the Graphic Design selection programmes – for which you need to submit a portfolio and participate in a skills test & interview – can only proceed after a prospective student has first been accepted to the university.

A National Senior Certificate (NSC) or an equivalent qualification with university admission to a bachelor's degree is required to be admitted to either of the Graphic Design programmes.

Please ensure that your NWU application has been submitted and *provisionally approved* before taking part in the BA Graphic Design selection procedure.

APS SCORE & PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

All applicants must achieve an Admission Point Score (APS) of *at least 24* in Grade 12 to be admitted, as well as a *minimum of 60% in English*.

Grade 11 marks may be used for the initial application and be granted provisional acceptance, but final Grade 12 marks are required to calculate the actual APS score and determine course admission.

ACADEMIC & DESIGN APTITUDE

Prospective students do not have to have had specific subjects at school, but should preferably be proficient in languages, writing skill and communication, have a natural talent for visuals, general knowledge, art and design, and should overall be a strong academic learner and creative thinker.

NWU UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS CLOSE
30 MAY 2025

ORGANISE YOUR PORTFOLIO

You are required to create a selection portfolio to display your creative thinking and artistic and/or design skills through completing a set number of tasks as outlined in the *"Portfolio Tasks"* section (page 33 to 37), as well as showcasing your own creative work.

Should your portfolio be assessed as displaying the correct skillset, you will be invited to the next phase of the selection process.

• Use an A4 flip file to present all your work. No files larger than an A4 will be accepted.

• Insert all the necessary documentation and forms in the right order, as outlined below.

• Complete the portfolio tasks by hand, and submit the original tasks neatly in your portfolio.

• Place a title page of each task as a divider to separate each task.

• Only submit the original work. Photo documentation/scans/copies of portfolio tasks will not be eligible for selection assessment.

• Pay attention to be neat in the presentation of your selection portfolio.

• Plan ahead to spend enough time on completing the portfolio tasks properly.

• Keep the format of your portfolio simple and clean.

• Focus on completing the required tasks and your own work to show your skills.

• Avoid using any distracting and irrelevant decorative elements materials in the portfolio.

• When you photograph your own work, whether 2D or 3D, use good lighting, avoid blurred images, stage it on a clean background, crop out unnecessary details and choose the right angle.

PORTFOLIO SUBMISSIONS CLOSE
28 JULY 2025

Delivery address for portfolios*

To: Ms. Zita Kyster
GRAPHIC DESIGN SELECTION
Hoffman Street
Building F2, Room G03
Private Bag X 6001
North-West University
Potchefstroom, 2520

PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2
PHASE 2

CONSTRUCT YOUR PORTFOLIO

Make sure to organise your portfolio contents according to the list below, in this order:

1. Portfolio Cover
Place your name, surname, university number and photograph of yourself.
Write *BA Graphic Design Selection 2024* as a heading.
2. NWU application confirmation letter
3. National Senior Certificate or a copy of your Grade 11 results
4. Applicant Information Form
5. Questionnaire Form
6. Declaration of Authenticity

7. Task 1 – Drawing Skill: Still life
8. Task 2 – Drawing Skill: Self-portrait
9. Task 3 – Conceptual Skill: Logo design
10. Task 4 – Visual Interpretation Skill: Collage
11. Task 5 – Typographic Skill: Expressive typography
12. Task 6 – Narrative Skill: Comic Strip
13. Task 7 – Narrative Skill: Animation Character
14. Task 8 – Own Design & Art Work
15. Other achievements such as certificates, awards, work experience, etc.

Please deliver or courier your portfolio to our administrative officer, Ms Zita Kyster.

*You are advised to track your parcel and factor in possible courier delays when sending your portfolio. The Graphic Design Subject Group is not responsible for ensuring the safe courier of portfolios. Note that exceptions will not be made for portfolios that are lost, misplaced or delayed by couriers.

PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3
PHASE 3

Should your portfolio be selected, you will be invited via email to one of our Skills Workshops & Interview Days, which will be held in person on the NWU Potchefstroom campus, in building F2. On this day, you will get to meet the staff and tell us more about yourself and your work. You will also be requested to participate in a creative thinking skills workshop, and draw a large pre-arranged still-life to measure your draughtsmanship.

Our selection panel will assess your interview and practical activities, and notify you within two weeks should you be successfully selected for our programme (Note that your NWU Application status will remain as "provisional acceptance" until your final Grade 12 results are available).

The skills workshops and interview will allow us to evaluate your abilities with the following criteria:

• Your general knowledge, with emphasis on the visual and textual.
• Your ability to engage meaningfully with images and texts.
• Your ability to generate a large number of ideas within a given timeframe.
• Your ability to conceptualise and execute a functional creative solution to a given design problem.
• Your ability to manage your time effectively.
• Your drawing and presentation skills.
• Your motivation, self-confidence, attitude and communication skills.

SKILLS TESTS & INTERVIEWS TAKE PLACE ON
20 SEPTEMBER 2025

TASK 1
DRAWING SKILL
STILL-LIFE

Medium: Lead pencils
Format: A4 drawing paper or board

Set up a small, interesting still-life composition using all of the following objects: a piece of material/textile, a tea cup/coffee mug, a book, and a fruit/vegetable. When you draw from real life, pay attention to the light source, form and texture, proportions, contrast, and shading techniques that are accurate to nature. You may not use a photograph and should observe and draw from life.

TASK 2
DRAWING SKILL
SELF-PORTRAIT

Medium: Lead pencils
Format: A4 drawing paper or board

Use a mirror to draw your own face from life, creating a self-portrait. Include your face, neck and the top of your shoulders. Make sure to use the majority of space on the paper, the portrait should not be too small. Pay attention to the light source, form and texture, proportions, contrast, and shading techniques that are accurate to nature. You may not use a photograph and should observe and draw from life.

TASK 3
CONCEPTUAL SKILL
LOGO DESIGN

Medium: A variety of writing and drawing materials may be used
Format: A4 sheets of paper, as many as you need

Do research about the Design Indaba Conference. Use creative techniques such as mind-mapping and scamping to get to an interesting concept for a new Design Indaba logo. Create 4 conceptually and visually interesting logo options, which may be pictorial and/or typographic. Include your process work, documenting your thinking and sketching before your final logos. All four logos should fit onto one A4 page.

TASK 4
VISUAL INTERPRETATION SKILL
DESIGN COLLAGE

Medium: Collage: found images and glue
Format: A4 paper

What does graphic design or visual communication mean to you? Make a compositionally interesting collage based on this theme with images from magazines, newspapers, leaflets and photocopies from books, even your own photographs. Your collage should have a concept and title. You may not use images from the internet.

TASK 5

TYPOGRAPHIC SKILL
EXPRESSIVE TYPOGRAPHY

Medium: 8 different mediums
Format: 2 x A4 sheets of quality paper or board, next to each other.

Divide each of the 2 A4 sheets into 4 blocks (each block will hold a typographic interpretation of a word). Select eight words from the list below and visually interpret each of your chosen words using an existing typeface or your own unique lettering. Execute each word in a different medium that is fitting to express the word visually. Use both traditional mediums and non-traditional mediums. You may not use scrapbooking paraphernalia and decorations.

Words to choose from: **delight, anxiety, ascend, invisible, pride, speed, peek, read, justice, magnify, decay, secret, triumph, split, trick, hurry.**

TASK 6
NARRATIVE SKILL
COMIC STRIP

Medium: Black Ink and pens
Format: A4 paper

Create a comic strip panel of 5 to 7 frames to illustrate a narrative or story. Choose a journey that you have taken or an event that happened, and tell a story about the experience without using any words, only with pictures. The journey can be physical, emotional or psychological. It can be humorous, serious or profound. It can be a journey that you make daily, or a more rare occasion. Plan your composition carefully and give your comic strip an appropriate title.

TASK 7
NARRATIVE SKILL
CHARACTER DESIGN

Medium: Coloured pencils and pens, coloured markers and/or different kinds of paint
Format: A4 sheets of paper or board

Use a sheet of paper to conceptualise a fictional character based on your own quirky personality traits. Show us how you came up with your character with brainstorming and sketching. Give your character a name, describe its special attributes, and shortly describe the setting or environment in which they will function. On a separate A4 sheet, draw and colour your final character, not smaller than 150mm x 200mm.

TASK 8
YOUR OWN WORK

Medium: High quality photographs
Format: Postcard size on A4 paper

Place postcard sized photographs or photocopies of a selection of minimum 8 examples of your own work in your portfolio. This may include any art works and design assignments, sculptures, photographs, etc. Place two works per A4 page.
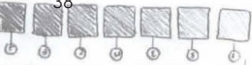
Include the following information for each work:
Title, date, medium, dimensions and purpose (e.g school assignment, hobby, commission, etc.)

FORMS
FORMS
FORMS
FORMS
FORMS

Please complete the *following forms* in this section and include them in your portfolio.

Print the forms, complete them by hand, and insert them into the portfolio in the correct place as outlined in the list mentioned before.

Note that incomplete forms will render a portfolio incomplete and your application cannot be processed. Incomplete portfolios will not be considered by the selection panel.

Applicant information form
Questionnaire
Declaration of authenticity

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM

Print this page A4, fill it out legibly and insert it in your portfolio.

Full names & surname:

ID number:

Student number:

Email address:

Cell number:

Current city/town of residence:

Postal address and code:

Secondary School name, number and address:

Parent/Guardian name and surname:
(This should be the person who will accompany you to the Interview Day)

Parent/Guardian email address:

Parent/Guardian cell number:

Relationship to applicant:

Print this page A4, fill it out legibly and insert it in your portfolio.

1. What was your favourite subject(s) at school, and why?

2. What are your general interests and hobbies and why do you enjoy them?

3. What kind of career would you like to pursue with this degree and why?

4. Name your favourite designers and artists, and motivate why they're inspiring.

5. Write a short explanation, in your own words, of what you think Graphic Design is and motivate why you think it is an important career in our society.

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

Print this page A4, fill it out legibly and insert it in your portfolio.

I, (full name) ....

hereby declare that all practical work and photo documentation of works in this portfolio are my own. I hereby confirm that I have executed these works independently and that no contribution was made by any other individual.

I understand that my portfolio will be rejected should it be established that the contents thereof have been falsely represented as my own work in any way.

Date: ....

Signature: ....

WE LOOK FORWARD
TO MEETING YOU!