Buckinghamshire New University

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1. Key Information

Programme Title:	BA (Hons) Illustration BA (Hons) Illustration with Foundation Year BA (Hons) Illustration (Top-Up)
Awarding Institution:	Buckinghamshire New University
Teaching Institution(s):	Buckinghamshire New University
Subject Cluster:	Visual Arts
Award Title (including separate Pathway Award Titles where offered):	BA (Hons) Illustration
Pathways (if applicable)	
FHEQ level of final award:	6
Other award titles available (exit qualifications):	Certificate of Higher Education Diploma of Higher Education BA Illustration (ordinary degree)
Accreditation details:	
Length of programme:	3 years 4 years with Foundation Year 1 year Top-Up
Mode(s) of Study:	Full Time
Mode of Delivery:	In person (on-site) delivery
Language of study:	English
QAA Subject Benchmark(s):	Art & Design (2019)
Other external reference points (e.g. Apprenticeship Standard):	
Course Code(s):	BAILLUFT / BAILLUFY / BAILLUTU
UCAS Code(s):	
Approval date:	01 December 2022
Date of last update:	January 2025 / May 2025

2. Programme Summary

The BA (Hons) Illustration course is aimed at visually creative people who want to make successful careers in the creative industries. You should consider choosing this award if they enjoy solving visual problems with your own unique aesthetic solutions. You should be culturally aware and enjoy experimenting with image and type. You should also be willing to experiment with appropriate digital technologies.

Our Illustration specialisation has a long history of shaping and training successful illustrators to national renown and beyond. Illustrators identify and solve problems working with ideas, information and visual story-telling to develop work which informs, instructs, engages and entertains an intended audience often working collaboratively with other creatives and clients. The world of illustration is an exciting and ever-expanding area of practice with many opportunities in emerging digital technologies such as virtual reality, gaming, film, web based platforms, moving image, animation and mobile devices as well as the more familiar areas of editorial and advertising platforms.

This course is structured to encompass and develop your knowledge and understanding of the fundamental skills necessary for a successful career in this area, and includes problem identification and problem solving, creative and intellectual thinking, understanding sequence, narrative, technical skills in the use of traditional and digital technologies, development of a personal visual vocabulary, ability to produce effective solutions, craft skills, awareness of historical and contemporary illustration issues, applying meaningful research and the presentation of ideas using verbal and visual communication across multiple platforms.

Buckinghamshire New University has a well-established and highly successful tradition of running image-based courses. This strong foundation has enabled the course team to maintain and develop a broad based and adaptable approach to illustration. You will learn the fundamental structure of the subject through the exploration of traditional skills such as drawing systems and typography along with experimentation using craft-based skills such as letterpress and screen-printing. Project-led work allows you to explore a variety of approaches to problem-solving within a tutor-led and supportive environment. A combination of historical and contemporary technologies is integrated. These skills can be applied through the use of digital software.

As the programme progresses, your skillset and confidence builds; our are then encouraged to take a more critical and strategic approach to the analysis and evaluation of your own work and that of your peers. As levels of creative autonomy increase, you will consult and negotiate with tutors. Your independence is encouraged through the ability to make choices regarding competition, live and self-initiated projects in support of your intended career pathways.

Central to the ethos of the Illustration course is the development of two aims; the first is self-authorship, where your point of view and vision play the pivotal role in identifying and communicating images and messages that are central to your own personal interests, opinions, and core values, and secondly a multi-disciplinary confidence and ability to accomplish communication tasks across a range of media and client bases. These aims reflect the current contemporary vocabulary of a modern illustrator.

3. Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

Programme Aims

This programme aims to:

1. Equip graduates with a broad range of technical, aesthetic, sustainable, transferable and intellectual skills which can be successfully applied to visual communication problems within a changing society

2. Develop professional illustrators, suitably equipped with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills and experience to enable them to seek freelance employment within the creative industries and/or continue their studies at post graduate level

3. Deliver a progressive programme of study that bridges the gap between further and higher education, encourages the development of independent thinking and personal responsibility and provokes creative experimentation

4. Inculcate a culture of creative experimentation that is underpinned by robust research and design development that cultivates independent creative practitioners with an appreciation for lifelong learning

5. Encourage learners to seek out resources and professional contacts in order to build an awareness of contemporary networking structures within the creative industries

Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding (K)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
K1	Evidence knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with illustration.
K2	Show knowledge and understanding and the main methods of enquiry associated with illusatration.
K3	Demonstrate knowledge of the emerging principles and ethical issues of the illustrator's disciplines, how those principles have developed and evolved.
K4	Recognise the interaction between materials, media and processes and the consequences of appropriate selection.
K5	Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between designer, client, manufacturer, and audience/user within an illustration context.

Analysis and Criticality (C)

On successful completion of the programme, you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
C1	Demonstrate an ability to identify, evaluate, interpret and present research, develop lines of enquiry, ideas and concepts and make sound visual judgements in accordance with subject knowledge, basic theories and concepts of illustration.
C2	Show an ability to use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis.
C3	Recognise how to identify, evaluate ,and interpret the significance and impact of the work of others on your own practice and that of others within art and culture in general.
C4	Define a problem and evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to problem solving within the illustration and design industries.
C5	Create new solutions to problems of an increasingly complex nature with sophisticated analysis, synthesis or creative responses.

Application and Practice (P)

On successful completion of the programme, you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
P1	Show an appropriate level of skill in the use of tools and materials, technical equipment and technologies, and be cognisant of any potential risks and dangers in their handling.
P2	Demonstrate an ability to effectively communicate an informative argument and analysis, and present proposed solutions in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
P3	Evidence an ability to apply underlying concepts, principles and techniques outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context.
P4	Apply awareness and basic understanding of the ethical and professional codes of practice, and industry standards underpinning visual communication disciplines.

Transferable skills and other attributes (T)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
T1	Demonstrate continuing personal and professional development through the acquisition of communication and independent learning skills.
T2	Demonstrate qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, increasing independence and decision-making.
T3	Manage own learning and make use of research materials appropriate to defined contexts.
T4	Grasp the significance of international professional practice and apply an awareness of global perspectives and transcultural considerations.

Graduate Attributes

The BNU Graduate Attributes of: Knowledge and its application; Creativity; Social and ethical awareness and responsibility; and Leadership and self-development focus on the development of innovative leaders in professional and creative capacities, who are equipped to operate in the 21st Century labour market and make a positive impact as global citizens.

On this programme, attributes are developed through the practical and theoretical application of acquired knowledge and its understanding within the larger context of illustration professional practice. (K1-K5; C3, C5, P3). The graduate attribute of creativity is developed through practical skills and the analysis of knowledge to encourage an experimental and critical approach framed by the wider contemporary ethical context and responsibility of illustration. (C1, 2, 3, 5; T1, T2). Our illustration degree promotes a critically framed and engaged practice to create a socially aware and ethically responsible practitioner (P1-P3, C4, K3, K5). Hence, through knowledge, analysis and practice, the programme fosters key transferable skills for self-development, including leadership skills required to become highly employable, socially aware professionals and responsible practitioners' ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century through the application of illustration principles (T1-T4, C5 P1, C1).

4. Entry Requirements

The University's general entry requirements will apply to admission to this programme with the following additions / exceptions:

- A typical offer will require a UCAS tariff score of: 88 - 112
- A minimum of two full A-levels (or equivalent) is required. Every application is considered on an individual basis.
- Applicants will need to complete an interview and/or demonstrate portfolio work, further guidance is given on the interview and portfolio advice pages.
- For further details of our international English entry requirements, please visit our international pages.
- Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements for the three-year undergraduate programme, or those who do not feel fully prepared for a degree course, can apply for a four-year programme including a Foundation Year - UCAS Score 32-56.
- The Level 6 programme is also offered as a Top-Up qualification for students who have completed a HND, FdA or other equivalent qualification in a relevant subject and who wish to progress further to achieve an Honours degree.

If you do not meet the entry requirements you may, if you have relevant professional experience, still be invited for interview, where you will be required to demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding for entry onto the course.

Previous study, professional and / or vocational experiences may be recognised as the equivalent learning experience and permit exemption from studying certain modules in accordance with our accreditation of prior learning (APL) process.

5. Programme Structure

Level	Modules (Code, Title and Credits)	Exit Awards
Foundation Year[1]	**Core modules:** CAD0001 Research and Development in Art and Design (20) CAD0002 Collaboration in Creative Practice (20) CAD0003 Visual Experimentation (20) CAD0004 Contextual Studies: Ideas, Concepts, Intro to research & writing (20) CAD0005 Portfolio (20) CAD0011 Project - Creative Realisation (20)	**N/A.** No credit is awarded at this Level.
Level 4	**Core modules:** CAD4016 Critical and Historical Thinking (20) CAD4091 Creative Skills and Technologies (20) CAD4018 Projects (20) CAD4019 Conceptual Thinking (20) CAD4020 Design Processes (20) CAD4089 Contemporary Issues and Creative Practice (20)	**Certificate of Higher Education**, awarded on achievement of 120 credits at Level 4
Level 5	**Core modules:** CAD5014 Design Research and Theory (20) CAD5053 Professional Studies- Graphic Design and Illustration (20) CAD5058 Industry Brief (20) CAD5056 Illustration Studies 1 (Image Making) (20) CAD5057 Illustration Studies 2 (Narrative) (20) **Option modules:** Choose from one of the following 2 modules: CAD5122 Belonging & Becoming (20) CAD5061 Enterprise (20)	**Diploma of Higher Education**, awarded on achievement of 240 credits, including a minimum of 120 credits at Level 5

---

[1] Modules on the Foundation Year only apply to learners who are enrolled on the "with Foundation Year" programme.

Level 6	Core modules: CAD6027 Final Major Project (40) CAD6028 Dissertation (20) CAD6029 Professional Practice (20) CAD6030 Creative and Professional Development (20) CAD6032 Personal Projects & Commissions (20)	**Ordinary Degree**, awarded on achievement of 300 credits, including 60 credits at Level 6 and 120 credits at each of Levels 4 and 5 **Honours Degree**, awarded on achievement of 360 credits, including 120 credits at each of Levels, 4, 5 and 6

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. Other option modules may also be introduced at a later stage enabling the programme to respond to changes in the subject area.

6. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and teaching

Studio-based activity is a significant feature of the course, providing locations for both individual and group tuition. In an effective learning environment, staff and learner create a community of practice as partners in the process of learning. The pedagogy is discursive with an emphasis on presentations, peer group learning, workshops and group critique. Both individual and group tutorials are an important approach, providing a supportive environment and encouraging reflective learning.

A variety of teaching and learning strategies are employed, including lectures, tutorials and seminar presentations. The key learning vehicle is through the project briefs which are practical in nature and originate from the following sources:

- Tutor written projects written to address specific areas of learning
- Competition/award schemes, briefs written by creative professionals from an industry/society facing perspective
- Live projects, originating from businesses, organisations, and from within the university such as research funded projects
- Self-written learner-initiated projects in negotiation with course tutors.

Projects and workshops are staged throughout the course to make increasingly complex demands of you. The final level of study requires you to manage and generate professional quality work which is suitable for exhibition and public dissemination. In-line with pedagogic practice within art and design a period of development is built into the course before you consolidate your work within your final project outcomes. Although modular in construct, the course requires you to bring together the parts into a coherent learning experience manifested within the Integrated Final Major Project.

Knowledge and understanding of commercial and professional practice is developed in a variety of ways. Externally-set, 'live' client set projects, which include engagement with the wider university, regional and national community/industries. In addition, the course takes advantage of the many national student design competitions/award schemes which are set by industry and business specialists all of which serves to expand your awareness of contemporary contexts and issues.

The early stage of the course is dedicated to supplying fundamental concepts, information and experience of process underpinning creative practice which can be expanded and utilised at a later stage. Visits to external institutions and from visiting professionals reinforce this experience.

Subsequently, the emphasis moves to the growing independence and self-direction in your work, and the tuition assumes a more individual dialogue with learners. You are encouraged to explore a diverse range of applications for images from which they will decide a personal balance and direction.

Learning strategies, under the direction of the course team, are designed to increase active involvement in the learning process. Broadly the aims are to increase your independence as the course progresses. On-going critical dialogue enables staff and learners to shape the overall coherence of the learner experience. Tutorial guidance fosters discussion on the progress of your intellectual and creative development. Group critiques encourage sharing of

best practice, facilitate alternative approaches to practical work and allow tutors to identify common concerns in the learning experience.

Showing work to peers, clients and in the public domain is common pedagogic practice on the course. This takes various forms including, the use of digital platforms, group peer critique, client presentations, interim exhibitions, and graduate show exhibitions (including but not limited to D&AD New Blood). These methods enable you to introduce your work to a wider audience, engage in public/peer/client review and situate your practice in a professional environment.

The development of independent learning skills is promoted through self-directed and self-initiated study at levels 5 and 6, which may be formalised through individually negotiated learning agreements. Such personal and professional development is generally expressed in a range of forms which may include reflective journals, blogs and personal development records.

You are encouraged to maximise your use of the workshop facilities contained within the University far beyond the traditional graphic design domains of print and screen-based equipment. The value of this, outside straightforward experimental aims, is to make design thinking and digital skills sharper and more personal and to develop a personal voice linked to an ability to think and work flexibly as part of a design team. The ability to negotiate access or assistance from technicians and lecturers outside of your course is a key transferable skill and only possible under a scheme that allows such freedom of choice.

You are very much encouraged to engage with work-based learning opportunities at Levels 5 and 6 of the course, which will contribute to your development on the Professional Studies and Professional Practice modules. Whilst individual initiative is encouraged, you will be given support on locating a suitable position and on making a professional application.

Learning takes place within a studio setting to best simulate 'real world' employment conditions. This integrates practice and theory, encourages debate, collaboration, and peer support in an interactive situation. Visiting lecturer programme is embedded in the course, where visiting professionals from a range of backgrounds contribute through presentations and/or workshops on your practice and specialism.

The following key features help foster an engaged approach to student-centred learning:

- You negotiating your own projects will enhance the motivational context of second and final year work
- Seminar groups will foster interaction within and outside regular meetings
- You will regularly encounter different views and perspectives, which will help you to construct a wider knowledge base.

The strategies which embody these features include:

- independent learning, involving increased decision making
- personal development, supported by tutorial seminars and seminar group discussion
- identification of issues through negotiated assignments
- improving personal reflection
- learning by experience developing individual and group skills

Assessment

Assessment strategies support your understanding of your learning processes and are designed to foster a deep approach to learning. Strategies also promote autonomous learning and self- evaluation as vital elements within the overall learning process.

You will be asked to complete a series of projects and workshop tasks given in the form of a project brief and workshop task sheet. Self and peer feedback during regular group and individual discussions will be an essential element in the maturation of ideas and visual development.

You will be expected, during critiques and other discussions, to display a critical and reflective approach to your own and the work of others.

Formative feedback and feed forward are considered a vital part of the assessment process on the course and is offered in oral form on a weekly basis within the studio situation. More formal oral and/or written formative feedback is given at key identified points, usually during presentations of work in progress.

Self and peer-evaluation constitute an important part of formative assessment and, on occasion, of the formal summative assessment process.

Summative assessment will take place at the end of the module based upon a portfolio submission of project and workshop outcomes and an industry investigation presentation. Submitted work will be assessed on the achievement of the module Learning Outcomes and awarded a grade based upon the grade marking descriptors. The assessments will take place with a full review of the design briefs and all the supporting development work, which should clearly document the breadth and depth of research and the development of conceptual ideas and visual language for each project undertaken.

Contact Hours

Learners can expect to receive approximately 12 hours of scheduled learning activities per week. You will also be expected to undertake 18-20 hours of independent study (including research and practice) per week towards the completion of your coursework.

7. Programme Regulations

This programme will be subject to the following assessment regulations:

- *Regulations for Taught Degree Programmes (2023)*

8. Support for learners

The following systems are in place to support you to be successful with your studies:

- The appointment of a personal tutor to support you through your programme
- A programme handbook and induction at the beginning of your studies
- Library resources, include access to books, journals and databases - many of which are available in electronic format – and support from trained library staff
- Access to Blackboard, our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is accessible via PC, laptop, tablet or mobile device
- Access to the MyBNU portal where you can access all University systems, information and news, record your attendance at sessions, and access your personalised timetable

- Academic Registry staff providing general guidance on University regulations, exams, and other aspects of students and course administration
- Central student services, including teams supporting academic skills development, career success, student finance, accommodation, chaplaincy, disability and counselling
- Support from the Bucks Students' Union, including the Students' Union Advice Centre which offers free and confidential advice on University processes.

9. Programme monitoring and review

BNU has a number of ways for monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning and teaching on your programme. You will be able to comment on the content of your programme via the following feedback mechanisms:

- Formal feedback questionnaires and anonymous module 'check-ins'
- Participation in external surveys
- Programme Committees, via appointed student representatives
- Informal feedback to your programme leader

Quality and standards on each programme are assured via the following mechanisms:

- An initial event to approve the programme for delivery
- An annual report submitted by the External Examiner following a process of external moderation of work submitted for assessment
- The Annual Monitoring process, which is overseen by the University's Education Committee
- Review by the relevant PSRB(s)
- Periodic Subject Review events held every five years
- Other sector compliance and review mechanisms

10. Internal and external reference points

Design and development of this programme has been informed by the following internal and external reference points:

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement – see detailed mapping below
- The BNU Qualifications and Credit Framework
- The BNU Grading Descriptors
- The University Strategy

Mapping of Subject Benchmark Statement and any relevant Apprenticeship Standard to Programme Learning Outcomes

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Benchmark / Standard requirement	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
Subject-specific Knowledge and Understanding, Attributes and Skills																		
Present evidence that demonstrates some ability to generate ideas independently and/or as self-initiated activity and/or in response to set briefs		x				x						x	x			x		
Demonstrate proficiency in observation, investigation, enquiry, visualisation and/or making	x	x				x				x	x			x	x		x	
Develop ideas through to outcomes that confirm the student's ability to select and use materials,				x			x				x						x	

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Benchmark / Standard requirement	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
processes and environments																		
Make connections between intention, process, outcome, context and methods of dissemination	x				x				x			x	x		x			
Knowledge of the broad critical and contextual dimensions of the student's discipline(s)	x					x			x					x	x			
Knowledge of the issues which arise from the creative practitioner's relationship with audiences, clients, markets, environments, users, consumers, and/or participants					x					x		x	x					x
Knowledge of major developments in current and emerging media and			x	x					x	x	x	x				x		

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Benchmark / Standard requirement	**K1**	**K2**	**K3**	**K4**	**K5**	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**	**C4**	**C5**	**P1**	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**
technologies in their discipline(s)																		
Understanding the significance of the work of other practitioners in their discipline(s)					x			x					x					
Understanding the role and impact of intellectual property					x					x				x				
Generic and Graduate Skills																		
Exercise self-management skills in managing workloads and meeting deadlines													x			x	x	
Accommodate change and uncertainty						x				x	x							
Analyse information and experiences, and formulate reasoned arguments						x				x			x			x		

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Benchmark / Standard requirement	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
Benefit from the critical judgements of others and recognise their personal strengths and needs								x								x		
Apply interpersonal, social and negotiation skills in interaction with others			x		x			x						x				x
Communicate ideas and information in visual, oral and written forms										x		x			x			
Present ideas and work to their audiences										x		x			x			
Navigate, retrieve and manage information from a variety of sources						x	x	x			x		x	x	x			
Select and employ communication and information technologies						x	x	x			x		x	x	x			
The ability to identify IP issues, prevent infringements of other's IP		x			x					x								

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Benchmark / Standard requirement	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
rights and take the appropriate steps to safeguard the innovation and commercialisation processes																		

Mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes to Modules

Programme Learning Outcome	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Module Code (Core)	**K1**	**K2**	**K3**	**K4**	**K5**	**C1**	**C2**	**C3**	**C4**	**C5**	**P1**	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**T1**	**T2**	**T3**	**T4**
Level 4																		
Critical and Historical Studies 1	x		x			x							x			x		
Creative Skills and Technologies		x		x		x					x	x			x		x	
Projects			x	x			x	x		x	x	x		x				
Conceptual Thinking		x		x	x		x		x	x			x			x		
Design Processes	x			x		x			x	x	x		x		x	x		
Contemporary Issues and Creative Practice				x			x			x		x					x	
Level 5																		
Design Research and Theory		x	x			x	x					x	x		x		x	
Professional Studies - Graphic Design and Illustration			x					x		x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Industry Brief	x			x	x		x			x	x		x	x		x		
Illustration Studies 1 (Image Making)	x	x				x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x

Programme Learning Outcome	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)				Transferable skills and other attributes (T)			
Module Code (Core)	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	T1	T2	T3	T4
Illustration Studies 2 (Narrative)	x	x				x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Level 6																		
Final Major Project		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dissertation		x	x			x	x		x			x		x	x	x	x	x
Professional Practice			x		x		x						x		x			x
Creative and Professional Development	x		x	x	x		x	x					x			x		
Personal Projects & Commissions		x	x		x	x		x		x			x			x		