

HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE & HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA



Programme Specification

Qualification titles:	Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Graphic Design (2023) Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Graphic Design (2023)
Qualification codes:	610/1796/6 (HNC) 610/1797/8 (HND)
Awarding institution:	Pearson Education Ltd
Accreditation details:	BTEC
Date specification was written:	July 2023
Date of next review:	July 2026

Aims of the Programme

Graphic design is a versatile career path for creative thinkers and for anyone interested in art, technology and communications. Adaptable to a wide range of industries, graphic designers can add value by working with creative teams in advertising and marketing, information technology, publishing, sales, public relations and more.

This programme is aimed at students who wish to pursue a career in graphic design, either as a freelance designer, working within a design organisation or as an in-house creative within a range of businesses, or not-for-profit organisations. It equips you with the professional and creative skills necessary to meet the needs of the graphic design industry.

The programme aims to develop your abilities as a creative and professional graphic designer capable of high levels of performance in the sector by:

- Giving you the core skills, knowledge and understanding required to succeed in the graphic design industry,
- Developing your confidence to work across a range of different business functions such as leading and managing projects, working with different clients and stakeholders and responding to complex graphic design challenges,
- Offering a balance between the skills required for employment or self-employment in graphic design and the knowledge essential for those seeking to take their education further (e.g. to a level 6 degree).
- Build your understanding of the impact of digital technologies on the contemporary design environment
- Cultivate your knowledge of culturally diverse organisations, cross-cultural issues, diversity and values that can be applied to your local and specialist needs.

Programme Outcomes

The HNC (level 4) will provide you with a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of graphic design. You will gain a wide range of practical, subject-specific skills through a combination of directed study and independent research. Vocational based projects will support you in developing your creative and professional practice, cultivating transferable skills such as communication, research and critical thinking, which are highly valued in higher education and in the workplace.

By the end of the HNC you will be able to:

- Apply contextual knowledge (history, theory, developments) in graphic design to a defined creative project.
- Analyse a given creative project brief to develop creative solutions, apply an iterative development process to problem solving in graphic design creative practice.
- Apply the technical knowledge and skills necessary for a graphic designer to a creative project
- Use appropriate techniques, media and formats to communicate ideas, concepts, development processes and project outcomes for a specified audience
- Demonstrate professional knowledge, behaviours and practices appropriate to a graphic designer

The HND (level 5) prepares you to move on to the final year of a degree programme in graphic design or to enter employment with the qualities and abilities necessary for roles that require personal responsibility and decision-making. You will develop an advanced understanding of graphic design. This includes building greater independence in your creative and professional practice by learning how to deal with uncertainty and complexity in larger projects as well as exploring solutions to design problems and critically evaluating a range of design work.

By the end of the HND you will be able to:

- Apply contextual knowledge to inform a response to a professional brief.
- Apply creative problem-solving skills in the development of ideas, proposals and final project outcomes.
- Use technical knowledge and skills to produce professional outcomes.
- Demonstrate professional knowledge, behaviours and project management skills.
- Present project development and outcomes, demonstrating professional communication skills.

Programme Structure

The Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) and the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND), provided by the Academy, are very well known and respected qualifications within the industry. The HNC is the same level as the 1st year of a UK university degree and the HND is the same level as the 2nd year of a UK university degree. Pearson has developed relationships with numerous universities that allow students to progress directly into a relevant degree program including opportunities for accelerated progression.

The Awards are comprised of the following credits:

HNC = 120 Credits Level 4

HND = 240 Credits Level 5

At each level there is 1 module, and 2 assessment units. You must successfully complete both assessment units within the HNC before progressing to HND. Each assessment unit will comprise a number of assessment tasks/elements which build towards the successful achievement of unit learning outcomes.

HNC (Level 4 FHEQ)			
Module A: Process & Practice			
Assessment Unit A1	Concept Development	85 credits	340 Guided Learning Hours
Assessment Unit A2	Creative Project	35 credits	140 Guided Learning Hours
HND (Level 5 FHEQ)			
Module B: Process and Practice			
Assessment Unit B1	Personal Professional Development	45 credits	170 Guided Learning Hours
Assessment Unit B2	Professional Project	75 credits	310 Guided Learning Hours

Teaching & Learning Strategy

The course is delivered asynchronously and taught through a proprietary learning management system developed for the Academy (known as the Online Learning Centre). You will engage in self directed learning by working through a series of lessons comprising of:

- course materials developed by the Academy (text, graphics, audio and video materials),
- learning activities,
- assessments and
- related teaching materials (e.g. support resources and additional readings, access to a student forum, student handbooks, grading rubrics etc)
- Access to a range of digital subscriptions for academic resources (e.g. Bloomsbury Applied Visual Arts Library and EBSCO Art Full-Text) to support your studies.

All lesson content, assessments and related teaching materials are developed with the consultation of industry experts and are delivered to you via the Online Learning Centre.

Each lesson is a step in a curated learner journey that supports knowledge acquisition and the development of subject specific skills and general skills (e.g. communication, research and analysis) that are transferable to both higher education and the workplace.

In addition to self-directed learning, which allows you to manage the pace and intensity of your studies, course assessment places an emphasis on project based learning. This instructional approach is particularly suited to subject areas in art & design. It emphasises the opportunity for you to develop skills and knowledge through practice by engaging in projects that reflect real-world scenarios (see 'assessment' for details).

You will also be supported by a series of regular online tutorials with your designated tutor, where you will be able to ask questions about lesson content, gain clarity around formative feedback received and raise queries about development work on project based assessments.

You are encouraged to undertake independent research outside of what is provided as part of the course material and are provided with reading lists with recommended sources relevant to topics covered throughout the programme as well as sources specific to each assessment.

The Online Learning Centre also provides an online student forum, where you are encouraged to engage in informal peer discussions, share work derived from practice activities and project based development work in order to facilitate collaborative learning.

You may choose to join the programme with a blended learning approach. Within the blended learning classes, there are a total of 72 hours of classroom sessions, delivered by a number of specialised tutors for the HNC programme, and a further 72 hours of classroom sessions for the HND programme. Normally each class is delivered by two tutors to facilitate workshops and in-class activities. Classes take place in a venue carefully selected for each centre on weekday evenings and/or Saturdays. Some classes feature guest speakers (industry professionals) who deliver workshops on specialised topics. Classroom students can also participate in class trips organised by the Academy in conjunction with classroom tutors. Throughout the programme you will be advised of industry events, seminars, webinars and other relevant events that would be worthwhile attending and beneficial to your education.

You will be assigned a tutor who you can email should you require additional support. The Student Services team is also available to answer your queries by email or telephone.

Assessment

You will be given 2-3 project-based assignment briefs to assess the skills development units (A1 and B1). Assignments may be subdivided into tasks, which will be delivered at key stages in your learner journey. These assignments are designed to build the your skill set through practice and reflection and will evaluate your capabilities in

- contextual knowledge,
- ideas generation and development,
- technical knowledge and skill,
- professional practice and
- communication.

You will be encouraged to work on these projects as you progress through the lessons and will have the opportunity to submit development work for formative feedback prior to the submission of project work for summative assessment. You will have 1 opportunity for formative assessment for each piece of summative work.

For the creative project and professional project units (A2 and B2), you will be given 1 assignment brief where you will be required to complete a personalised design project of significant scope. The project will be designed to reflect a real world industry scenario and you may be able to use your completed project as part of a portfolio of work when entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. At the beginning of your learner journey, you will receive a 'project handbook' with key details and requirements to support you as you develop your project for summative assessment. In addition, lessons will be delivered at key stages in the programme to provide guidance in developing your project work. There will be 2 - 3 opportunities for you to receive formative feedback (depending on the unit) for development work on your project.

Learner evidence required to fulfil summative assessment and demonstrate ability to meet the learning outcomes set out by the awarding body BTEC may include (but is not limited to):

- formal essays or case studies,
- sketchbooks
- client brief analysis
- concept or mood boards,
- research and reflective journals
- logbooks,
- project proposals
- portfolio of design work
- style guides
- digital or video presentations

All assessments are delivered and submitted online through the Online Learning Centre

Grading of Assessments

Units A1 and B1 will be divided into 2-3 smaller summative assessments, respectively, which you will submit at key stages throughout your course. For each assessment you will be required to submit your development work once for formative assessment. You will receive detailed qualitative feedback for your development work in advance of submitting work for summative assessment. Assessments will be equally weighted for grading.

Units A2 and B2 will be assessed by a single project based assessment, respectively, which you will submit at the end of the course. For each assessment you will be required to submit your development work 2-3 times for formative assessment. You will receive detailed qualitative feedback for your development work in advance of submitting work for summative assessment.

For each summative assessment you will receive either a fail, pass, merit or distinction demonstrating the level to which you have met (or not met) the learning outcomes for that assessment.

The overall grade for a module (and the overall qualification grade) will be calculated in accordance with points per assessment unit criteria and point boundaries outlined in 7.6.2 of the Pearson Higher Nationals in Graphic Design Specification (first teaching September 2023).

All results (for individual assessments, units, modules and overall qualification grades) are provisional until verified by the BTEC External Examiner during the External Examiner visit.

Duration of Programme

You may take up to 3 years to complete the HNC (Level 4) and may take up to 4 years to complete the HND (Level 5). You are able to study at a guided pace, with appropriate deadlines ensuring the completion of learning activities, formative and summative assessments. Appropriate time for reflection and critical engagement with your own work, and the work of others is built into the cadence of the programme. You will be provided with an assignment calendar at the start of their programme, enabling you to plan your approach to both formative and summative assessment, and to promote timely completion of the programme within the overall maximum timeframe.

Entry Requirements

There are no formal academic requirements for entry into the programme. However, in order for you to have a reasonable chance at successful completion you are likely to hold one of the following:

- a BTEC Level 3 qualification in Art and Design or Media
- a GCE Advanced Level profile that demonstrates strong performance in a relevant subject or adequate performance in more than one GCE subject. This profile is likely to be supported by GCSE grades at A* to C (or equivalent) and/or 9 to 4 (or equivalent) in subjects such as maths and English
- relevant work experience, or
- an international equivalent to the above qualifications.

If English is not your native language, you will need to demonstrate that your English language capability meets the standard equivalent to the levels identified below.

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level B2
- Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic 51
- IELTS 5.5; Reading and Writing must be at 5.5
- or equivalent.

Academic Team

The academic team comprises a Programme Leader who oversees the effective delivery of the programme and who is supported by an Academic Administrator. Additional Tutors support you for the duration of your course through the Online Learning Centre and in live group tutorials. Tutors also provide you with formative feedback on development work and assess completed work for summative assessment. The graphic design tutors form part of a highly skilled and knowledgeable team. Some of the tutors have more specialised qualifications and others have a broader knowledge of various, relevant topics. You will benefit from their varied and vocationally relevant industry knowledge. Assessment decisions are internally verified by the academic team in line with BTEC standards.

External Examiner & Quality Assurance

The Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) and the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) are higher education qualifications, aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmarks, and are part of the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

The Academy is a BTEC Centre approved to offer BTEC qualifications. The programme adheres to the standards of BTEC which are verified as part of the BTEC External Examiner (EE) visit. There are normally two EE visits per year and these visits include the verification of student results, sampling student work and verification of the Academy's QA Policies and Procedures.

These policies and procedures are available to students within the student area of the Online Learning Centre and it is recommended that students periodically review these.

The Academy is also accredited by the British Accreditation Council as an online, distance and blended learning provider and is recognised by the International Approval and Registration Centre (IARC).

Additional Information

Our programme is a careful development and synthesis of many years of industry knowledge and educational teaching practice of the subject. All key staff are passionate about the graphic design industry and have firsthand experience of what it takes to be a professional in this fast-moving economy. We aim to provide a programme and mode of study that is accessible and available to all. We start our programmes with the fundamental basics of graphic design, and this allows students to build up a thorough knowledge and base that will allow them to progress into both employment and University to a Level 6 degree (UK). Our programme focuses on the practical implications of working in the business of graphic design but is still broad enough in its approach to allow students to branch off into other avenues of the creative industries in general. In summation, graphic design is a very broad subject with a range of applications and different avenues that graduates can choose to follow. In this programme we combine practical application with academic rigour to produce balanced and well-rounded graphic designers who are fit to apply their knowledge in a broad range of career arenas.



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