

GRAPHIC DESIGN, B.DES.

Begin Campus: University Park

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

Mission: Penn State Graphic Design prepares creative designers and visionary leaders who build engaging experiences and sustainable relationships among people, places, services, and communities.

Vision: Designers of tomorrow anticipate an evolving context for professional practice through innovative problem-solving at different scales—from objects to systems—engaging with people-centered research and theory, ethical practices, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Goal:

- Goal 1: Build transformative graphic design education and experiences.
- Goal 2: Advance innovative design practices in teaching and learning, research, creative activity, and professional practice.
- Goal 3: Develop strategic alliances, partnerships, and collaborations to broaden the impact of graphic design.
- Goal 4: Establish a culture of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all students, faculty, and staff.

What is Graphic Design?

The Bachelor of Design in Graphic Design program at Penn State, is a four-year professional program accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). Graphic design is a professional field of visual communication, creative thinking, and complex problem-solving. Practitioners connect people with ideas, products, environments, and experiences. Graphic design explores systems, technologies, methods, and strategies for integrating typography, imagery, and form into a visual language that informs, instructs, and persuades. It is an engaging and evolving knowledge for advancing the human experience.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You enjoy learning and playing with new ideas and emerging technologies.
- You are creative, focused, and engaged.
- You love typography and imagery.
- You want to make things that improve the world and our experience of it.

Entrance to Major

The admission process has two stages to provide opportunities for more students, including underrepresented groups, beyond GPA requirements.

- Stage 1: Apply online at <https://admissions.psu.edu>. The Admissions Office reviews applications to form a pool of qualified candidates. All students in this pool are invited to submit "Evidence of Creative Work (ECW)."
- Stage 2: Graphic Design Faculty reviews ECW submissions, focusing on creative thinking and personal reflection rather than prior art skills. Offers are extended on a rolling basis for entry in the fall semester.

Applicants who are not accepted into the major may re-apply the following year but must realize that this course of action could delay their graduation by at least one year.

The Undergraduate Admissions Office manages the entire application process for first-year applicants to the Bachelor of Design in Graphic Design.

Entrance Procedures

Students interested in pursuing Graphic Design (B.Des) should follow the appropriate first year, change of major, or transfer application instructions found under Graphic Design at <https://arts.psu.edu/how-to-apply/#specific>.

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Design degree in Graphic Design, a minimum of 120 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Requirements for the Major	75

Requirements for the Major

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
GD 1S	First-Year Seminar in Graphic Design	1
GD 101	Design Foundation I	4
GD 107	Graphic Design Studio - Components	4
GD 110	User Experience Design: Concepts and Principles	3
GD 115N	Visualizing Information	3
GD 201	Typography	4
GD 202W	The History of Graphic Design	3
GD 207	Graphic Design Studio - Products	4
GD 210	User Interface Design and Prototyping	3
GD 211	Design Photo and Motion	4
GD 307	Graphic Design Studio - Systems	4
GD 308	Graphic Design Seminar	3
GD 407	Graphic Design Studio - Communities	4
GD 409	Exhibition and Portfolio	4
GD 495	Internship	3
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 12 credits from the following:		12
GD 300	Design Photography	
GD 315	Humanizing Data	
GD 320	Interaction Design	
GD 400	Time and Sequence	

Supporting Courses and Related Areas

Select 12 credits in consultation with an academic adviser. This category of coursework gives students the freedom to explore a range of academic interests, develop concentrations, or pursue minors.

12

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Quantification (GQ): 6 credits
- Writing and Speaking (GWS): 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Arts (GA): 3 credits
- Health and Wellness (GHW): 3 credits
- Humanities (GH): 3 credits
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS): 3 credits
- Natural Sciences (GN): 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain): 6 credits

Exploration

- GN, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses. This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

University Park

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Graphic Design, B.Des. at University Park Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 15A, or 30H [†]	3 GD 102 ^{*#}	3
GD 1S ^{*#}	1 Additional Course for Major (see list below) ^{*1}	3
GD 100 ^{*†#}	3 General Education Course	3
GD 101 ^{*#}	3 General Education Course	3
GD 115N or AA 121 ^{*#}	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	
	16	15

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
GD 200 [*]	3 GD 202W [*]	3
GD 201 [*]	3 GD 203 [*]	3
IST 250 [*]	3 IST 256 [*]	3
Additional Course for Major (see list below) ^{*1}	3 PHOTO 202 [*]	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
	15	15

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
CAS 100A, 100B, or 100C [†]	3 ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D [†]	3
GD 300 [*]	4 GD 302 [*]	4
GD 301 [*]	4 GD 303 [*]	4
General Education Course	3 Additional Course for Major (see list below) ^{*1}	3
	General Education Course	3
	14	17

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
GD 400 [*]	4 GD 402 [*]	4
GD 495 [*]	3 Additional Course for Major (see list below) ^{*1}	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
General Education Course	3 Elective	3

General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	14.5	14.5

Total Credits 121

- * Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
- † Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
- # Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
- † Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

¹ ADDITIONAL COURSE FOR MAJOR SELECTION (12 credits)

- Select 6 credits from History of the Arts coursework, which may be counted toward General Education Arts requirement.
- Select 6 credits from GD 297(3); GD 304(3); GD 310(3); GD 397(3); GD 401(3); GD 404(3); GD 495(3); GD 497(3) (Sem: 5-8)

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

Career Paths

Penn State Graphic Design develops a pathway for placement in the nation's top creative firms and companies. The undergraduate B.Design program prepares students for broad opportunities in today's global marketplace. In addition to providing students with a robust foundation in technical skills, key concepts, methods, and knowledge, the program fosters and prepares students' overall creative and intellectual capacity. This degree prepares students for employment in design studios, advertising agencies, publishing, corporate design, and more — creating motion graphics, data visualization, packaging, print products, websites, apps, user experience design, and interactive media. Students may also choose to undertake specialized graduate studies.

Careers

All graphic design students at Penn State complete at least one summer internship with leading creative agencies worldwide or study abroad. This provides real-world experience and global perspectives to help students build a professional network even before they graduate. Graphic design students enjoy an excellent job placement rate in top agencies and companies. In addition to gaining active faculty and alumni connections

nationwide, Penn State graphic design students benefit from an in-house career adviser who can connect them with professional opportunities. Graphic designers are in high demand across industries, and graduates of the Penn State program are active in such diverse fields as branding design, motion design, web design, publishing, and environmental design.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM (<https://arts.psu.edu/academics/stuckeman-school/stuckeman-career-services/>)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

While graduates of Graphic Design programs may opt to pursue Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programs in specialized topics or focus areas, professional practice opportunities are readily available to Bachelor of Design graduates.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (<https://arts.psu.edu/academics/department-of-graphic-design/>)

Professional Resources

- American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) (<https://www.aiga.org>)
- Graphis New Talent Annual (<https://graphis.com>)
- College Art Association (CAA) (<https://www.collegeart.org/>)

Accreditation

The Penn State Graphic Design program is accredited through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. NASAD is an association of approximately 323 schools of art and design, primarily at the collegiate level, but also including postsecondary non-degree-granting schools for the visual arts disciplines. It is the national accrediting agency for art and design and art and design-related disciplines.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACCREDITATION OF THE GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM (<https://arts.psu.edu/degree-programs/accreditation/>)

Contact

University Park

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<https://arts.psu.edu/academics/department-of-graphic-design/>