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FALMOUTH / **FLEXIBLE**
UNIVERSITY / LEARNING

MA Illustration



Awarding Body: Falmouth University
Level: 7 (also available to study at PGDip level)
Mode of study: online, part-time (with optional face-to-face events)
Duration: 2 years
Cost: £11,300
Entry requirements:
An honours degree equivalent to a UK 2:2 or above in Illustration or a related subject Proof of proficiency in English (minimum overall score of IELTS 6.5 with at least 6.0 in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening)
A digital portfolio of your illustration practice

Introduction

The course provides structure for debate and postgraduate learning in the critical practice of illustration, encouraging your creative practice to grow from insights and learning shared in our online global studio together. The course ethos is to maximise opportunities presented by online study, whilst ensuring the core elements of the subject and postgraduate scholarship are delivered.

The structure and ethos has been developed to provide students with a postgraduate journey in illustration that seeks to examine personal practice in relation to the constantly evolving nature of the subject globally and culturally. This underpins how learning is delivered, the structure of modules and how the content within them is experienced.

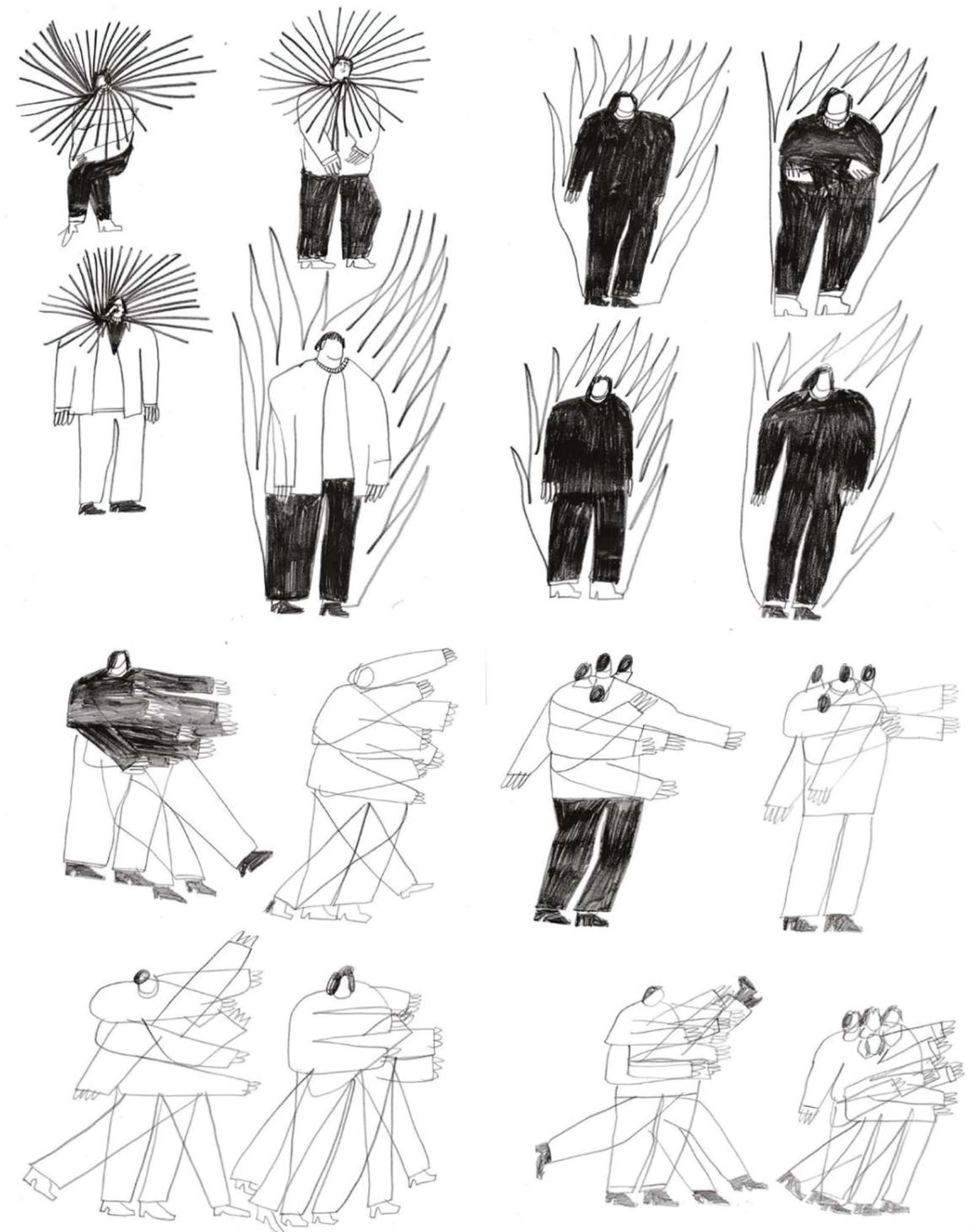
Studying as part of an international cohort, you will learn by considering the similarities and differences between how illustrators work today; developing a critically informed practice through projects and briefs that challenge your understanding of what it means to work within or across geographic and cultural boundaries, developing a heightened, and responsive understanding of the differing needs of local and global audiences.

These briefs introduce cross-cultural learning and identity to promote a sophisticated appreciation of diversity and cultural difference expressed through imaginative, compelling and effective visual communication in whatever area of illustration practice you decide to pursue. Working as a geographically dispersed cohort, online students will be encouraged to see problems from new perspectives and build the skills to implement their ideas in innovative and creative ways. To support this and provide an ongoing development of ideas, the course has involved some of the world's leading illustrators, teachers, researchers and organisations who help ensure the learning experience on the MA is both current and highly connected.

As part of this currency, we embrace the opportunities and the challenges introduced by rapidly changing technologies. These are transforming illustration practice and the wider visual communications industries, and also how images and visual narratives are circulated, interpreted and consumed. Whether building upon traditional fields or responding to new or emergent media, audiences and markets, the course structure accelerates, motivates and encourages students to take their next creative leap; developing a practice and career path that is adaptive and forming a new step in their professional journey and life.

Why online

We have chosen an online environment to support students with their next career and business step; to share ideas, culture and learning internationally, to investigate new models of process, and different approaches to exchange and collaboration. This postgraduate experience is highly flexible and relevant for illustration, allowing students to access a huge breadth of cross cultural and international thinking via a student network studying from across the globe. Studying online allows you to continue working and bring a more reflective and rounded understanding of your practice and entrepreneurial skills.



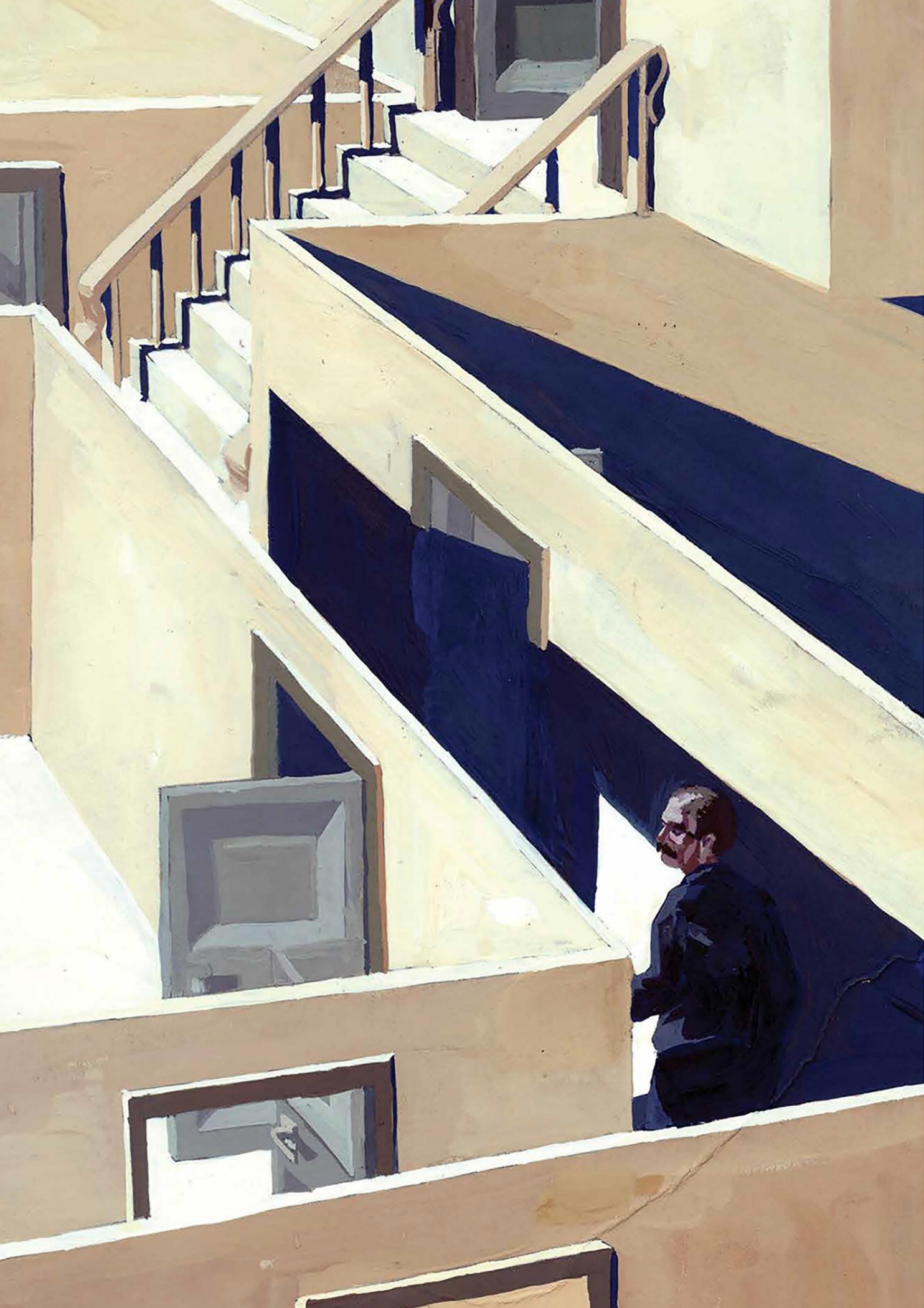


Illustration at Falmouth

The root meaning of the word Illustration is to illuminate, to educate or enlighten, literally to shed light on a subject. A successful illustrator needs to be adept at visual problem-solving to communicate an idea or premise, either in response to a brief or client, or self-generated. This requires artistry, analytical skills and the ability to construct and execute relevant and affecting or impactful visual narratives. The different modules of the course provide key learning experience in the core aspects of illustration practice from both a professional and academic perspective, with an emphasis on career development. The modules are designed to challenge and deepen your understanding and practice of illustration and to support your evolving personal visual identity or brand. Within the module structure, different teaching and learning methods are used to help you develop your skills, and you'll be encouraged to develop your own interests. Introductions, lectures and regular webinar discussions allow you to engage weekly, both building knowledge and informing approach to the projects or activities set.

Briefs are introduced across the span of each module to allow you to pace your work within a given week alongside other commitments. Short learning activities or experimental exercises will be set in parallel to longer, connected and over-arching briefs. Projects are often designed to enable and support a wide variety of different outcomes. However, key themes and areas of work have been developed for all students to complete that challenge assumptions about cultural difference, to encourage cross-cultural exchange and collaboration and to promote an understanding of the social, cultural and environmental responsibilities that are integral to the practice of illustration.

Throughout the course you will maintain a reflective online research journal that helps you chart your creative journey. This is also where you can continually practice, providing you with an open-ended repository of creative experimentation that you will be developing further as you progress through the course. This is particularly useful across the rotational modules at the centre of the course, so your practice continues to evolve, emboldened and refined by the particular focus each module brings.

The modules and online learning environment also support personal development through the sharing of work, ideas and innovation, with regard to developing awareness of global contexts and collaboration. To be effective illustrators, now and in the future, the course encourages its students to locate their creative practice in relation to local and global audiences within a climate of accelerated technological and cultural change, and to be strong communicators, able to confidently collaborate with other professionals globally. This is the core ethos of the course and is embedded throughout via personal, peer and tutor reflection. Modules will therefore utilise a variety of learning approaches and incorporate practical, written assignments and on-going reference to exemplars or case studies. These will include recent interviews and conversation with illustrators and other professionals within the visual communications industry that allow you to gain contemporary insights and also identify specialisms or focus relevant to the direction of your own practice in the future.

Illustration is conventionally perceived as a solitary occupation considered predominantly as a freelance, independent profession. While many illustrators still operate on a freelance basis, the view of illustration as a singular or reclusive practice has changed significantly in recent years, impacted by the value now placed on transferable skills and the growth of multi-disciplinary approaches within the visual communication industries. To this end the course encourages collaborative team work.

This not only builds organisational and inter personal skills but offers the student insights into collaborative approaches to ideas generation.

You will be encouraged to share your individual perspectives on the subject of Illustration and also to share examples of good practice. You will develop flexible and collaborative skills in order to understand the expectations and experiences of group learning within the curriculum. The online delivery and international scope of the course places you with in a global cohort of diverse practitioners and offers unique and exciting opportunities to develop professional networks, work in teams, and complement each other's specialisms and expertise.

In the final module, you develop a project proposal resulting in a significant body of work, supported by a related critical contextual report or a business orientated plan and strategy, that summarises and projects your professional direction. All outputs require you to identify your pathway and personal creative identity in illustration or broader field of visual communication. The conclusion of the course sees you launch your work and your brand, whilst also celebrating the work of the whole cohort in a final online exhibition.

To complement the core online platform there is also the option to participate in two residential or face-to-face networking experiences per year, including master-classes or portfolio reviews with leading practitioners and professionals, or conference-type events. These meetings will be aligned to key illustration, industry and cultural events, such as the House of Illustration and OFFSET Dublin, the Bologna Book Fair, and The London Illustration Fair.

Delivery methods

Concise online presentations/ lectures: introduce key ideas and issues to provide orientation through the presentation of core topics. All lectures and presentations are created for the online medium and are not simply recordings of live teaching events. Lectures are always set in the context of an online activity, dialogue or other opportunity to create critical reflection and dialogue amongst and between students and teaching staff.

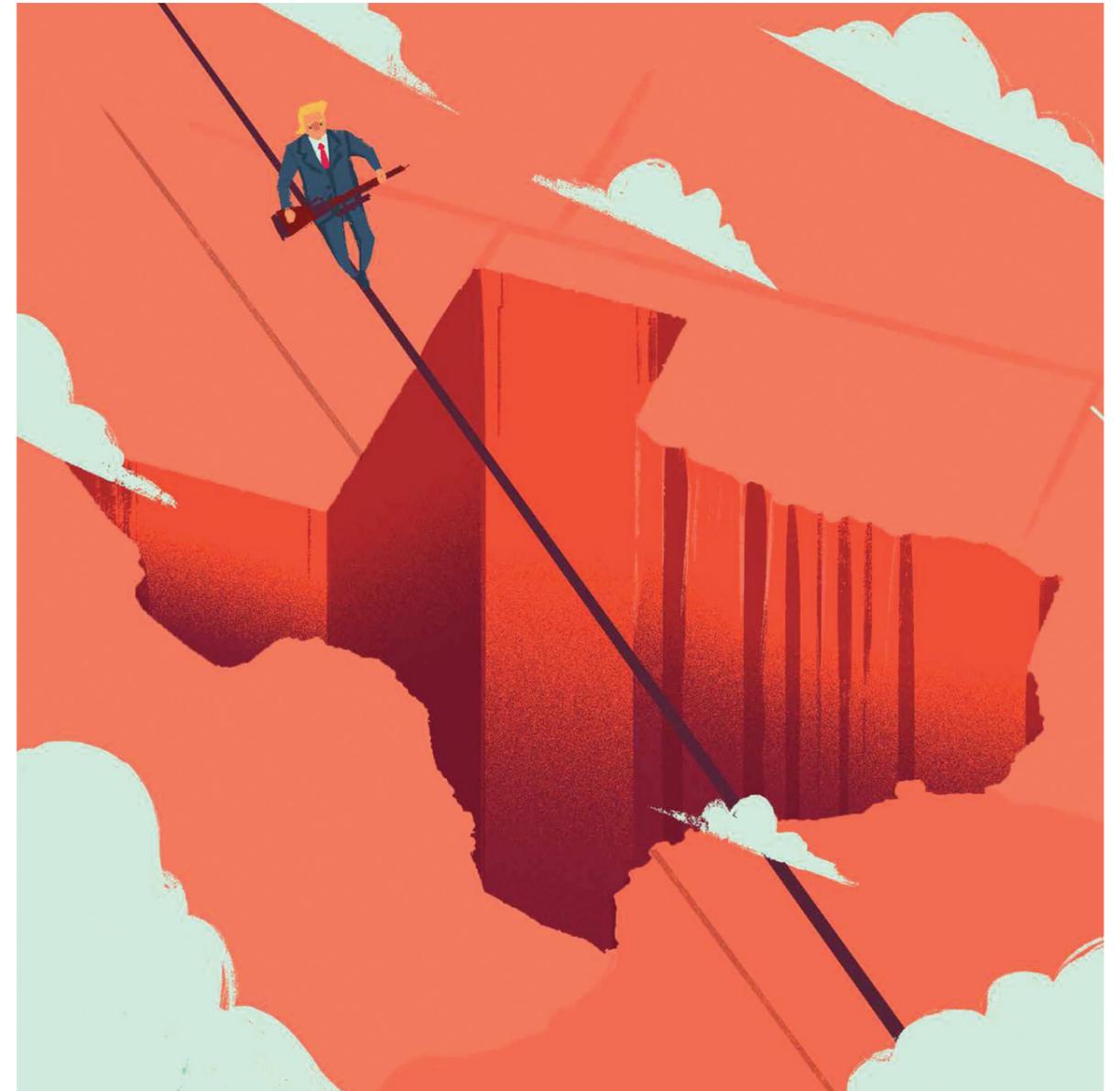
Guest talks: from key practitioners and industry professionals provide relevant and current insights into the subjects and complement discussion seminars.

Learning activities: provide guided opportunities to apply and interrogate newly learned concepts, for peer and tutor feedback on the group's work, and engagement with readings and resources to help you structure your ideas.

Small group and class discussions: provide a forum for interaction, dialogue and debate, reflection and critical feedback.

Online critiques: allow you to present your work in progress, testing assumptions, ideas and methodologies, to develop your research, and to receive feedback from peers and tutors.

Online practice-based workshops: deliver relevant skills to support you to explore a range of illustrative practices – these will cover both autographic and digital approaches to illustration.



Individual and group tutorials: are regularly available throughout the course. You will be allocated a Personal Tutor, and project Supervisors in Module 5: MA Project.

Independent study: is an important part of the course and is self-directed research, including critically informed reflection and ongoing practical and contextual research. We encourage you to research and explore material for use in a variety of ways, e.g. in preparation for seminars, assignments and for your MA Project. This provides opportunities for you to investigate relevant areas of interest in more depth and to demonstrate autonomous learning.

Self-evaluation and peer feedback: Critical reflection is encouraged throughout the course via a process of self-evaluation. Peer feedback is a critical aspect of study and development, developing key skills in professional development, constructive criticism, relationship building and personal communications strategies.

Professional networking: You are encouraged to build a professional network through the duration of the course. This network may include commercial connections within the visual communication industries but may also include practicing illustrators.

Module 1 | PROCESS AND PRACTICE (30 credits)

This module introduces the different contexts/applications of Illustration today, with a view to positioning your own practice and developing your personal pathway. You will expand your understanding of 'audience' and the differing needs of audiences. Examples of pathways include: editorial, advertising, non-fiction/information, children's books/young audience, authorial practice. The module seeks to examine local and global perspectives of the subject and the emergent skills required to imagine and realise effective illustration/s for both regional and global audiences.

This introductory module also requires you to test and evaluate different approaches to the key process of ideas generation, which underpins effective illustration. You will explore techniques, strategies and systems of visual problem-solving within the context of your own practice, expand your understanding of research methodology and develop reflective analysis skills. For example, each student is asked to analyse their practice and identify twenty-six marks/techniques which they use to generate their visual outcomes. They then label each mark with a letter, creating a parallel, wordless alphabet. Students are asked to create a series of images with only a title and a range of letters (corresponding to their list of marks) for guidance. So, 'Cathedral, using marks C, D, W' for instance.

Delivered alongside a short presentation on semiotics (also known as the 'science of signs'), these tasks enable personal and practice-based reflections on the 'signifier' and 'signified' while also encouraging new approaches to ideas generation. This work will be evidenced in the student Journal/Logbook.

In short, the module is concerned with illustration and the illustrator's creative process and the academic and research skills needed for effective and fully engaged participation in the course, and further study. It seeks to establish the fundamental essence of being an illustrator today and your ability to select appropriate ideas generation and visual problem-solving strategies for your work.



Module 2 | VISUAL LANGUAGE (30 credits)

To accelerate the development of your personal 'visual language' this module involves an in-depth exploration of the broad range of visual tools available to the illustrator, including different approaches to the core mark making skills, both haptic and digital, relevant to illustration practice. It develops your ability to analyse and select visual tools that communicate ideas effectively, while expressing your originality. You will strengthen your observational drawing skills and be encouraged to experiment with a wide variety of media, evaluating their inherent qualities and potential to convey ideas. For example, you will critically appraise the role of composition and colour theory in successful visual communication. The cohort will also consider global perspectives, to assess whether and when visual language requires 'translation'. Importantly, you will develop an advanced understanding of the relationship between visual language and ideas generation to achieve effective creative outputs in conjunction with key themes and issues facing the discipline and those who operate within it today.

This module encourages you to push the boundaries of your practice through the acquisition of new visual language tools, and supports the integration of theory and practice in your work. Through research and analysis, you begin to establish a personal visual identity, and to position this in the context of the wider visual communications industry.

Module 3 | NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING (30 Credits)

In this module you will explore the fundamental role of 'storytelling' within illustration practice and the wider visual communication industries, analysing its theoretical, cultural contexts and critically evaluating storytelling strategies as appropriate for differing local and global audiences. Different narrative systems or frameworks will be examined and tested within the context of your own developing practice. This will include amongst others; linear, multiple and parallel narratives, plot types, counterpoint, formats for narrative storytelling (children's picture books, graphic novels, comics, online, gaming, apps), creative writing, characterisation, world building. This particular module provides opportunities for the cohort to research narrative and storytelling from diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives, drawing on and sharing individual experience as well as external case studies and expertise, resulting in a critical evaluation in the form of an essay.

The need to develop and expound a creative methodology in order to effectively communicate a visual narrative effectively will be made apparent to students through an opening collaborative project. Following on from this, the module is delivered through a series of seminars and tasks which explore formal concerns, such as pacing for different narrative structures, commercial issues such as current trends in children's books, and historical case-studies such as Frans Masereel and wordless narrative. Students will then choose a narrative structure through which to develop their own praxis. So, for example, a student interested in developing work for children's picture books may engage with the writings of the child psychologist Jean Piaget. Whatever their interest – non-fiction graphic novels, computer games, cartoon strips, to arbitrarily name three – students will create a final outcome driven by a central social and culturally minded research issue.

Module 4 | PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (30 Credits)

This module focuses on the professional practice of Illustration, its applications, procedures and networks within a contemporary global context, building your entrepreneurial skills to inform your career or business future.

You will consider your own 'brand values' and develop an appropriate strategy for disseminating them to the right people in the industry. You will be required to identify a network of industry connections and prepare a coherent and co-ordinated marketing and self-promotion strategy. This will include acquiring an advanced understanding of social media strategy. You will also learn about the networks, infrastructure, and technical and regulatory mechanisms that support professional practice – such as illustration agencies, illustration studios, illustration collectives, building a client database, tax & book keeping principles, copyright/licences/contracts, portfolio building, exhibition organising and curation – developing your confidence and critical judgement in operating to professional standards. As part of your promotional strategy, you will develop your entrepreneurial and self-promotion skills to showcase a product of your own making. This will include, for example, developing your own website, which will be refined and delivered in the final study block to support your final MA project.

Module 5 | MA PROJECT (Final period of study - 60 Credits)

During this module you will develop a comprehensive body of work that reflects your chosen pathway and expresses an original personal and professional identity. It builds on learning from previous modules and allows you to position yourself and your work for next steps following the course. Project work therefore can develop from a number of perspectives; being research or theory-led (for further research study at PhD level) or personally or professionally orientated (for independent or studio practice). Whilst this module is primarily self-led, the development stage ensures the final project has evolved with rigour and the depth of enquiry to achieve the required level of postgraduate attainment. On completing a project proposal during the first three weeks of the module, you will then make and refine your final work, ensuring that the appropriate 'making' facilities are available locally so you can be realistic about your aims and objectives for your project.

The final practice-based submission is also delivered with a critical and contextual report, which outlines the key theory and research underpinning your project. As an alternative to this (subject to negotiation), you may also submit a business-orientated plan and strategy, to support the launch of your business on leaving the course. In positioning your practice academically and strategically, you will address your future focus, whether this means working independently, or within a collective or studio environment, or preparing for future PhD study. The module will culminate in the launch of a course-specific website that will serve as an online exhibition of student work. Each cohort's online exhibition will be archived and made accessible to industry via a course 'portal site'.