

# What can I do with a degree in... **GRAPHIC DESIGN?**

## Why study **GRAPHIC DESIGN?**

Graphic Design is a dynamic and vital cultural force. It is applied in diverse applications across businesses and professions. Graphic Design in the School of Art and Design aims to prepare students for professional practice. It focuses on design thinking, interactive and experience design, research and social practices, and developing a range of production skills.

The program combines interdisciplinary subjects with research, cultural investigations and communication using a broad range of media. The 4-year program requires a summer internship, and prepares students for the collaborative, interactive, and participatory nature of careers in design fields and graduate study in related disciplines.

Graphic Design at WCU is uniquely defined by the diversity of studio and academic courses available within the program. Interwoven with challenging content in literature, history, technology, business and science, are courses that support print and screen-based communication, interactive and motion design, and in-depth work developing a range of technical, conceptual, and design process skills.

## What are the **DEGREE OPTIONS?**

**Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) with an emphasis in Graphic Design**

## What is the **ADMISSION PROCESS?**

Student must submit an Entrance Portfolio of digital images of their work and a letter of application. Details on these portfolio requirements



and portfolio advice can be found on the [Graphic Design webpage](#).

## What **JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?**

Our graphic design graduates work within diverse fields of professional design including: healthcare and marketing, education, motion design, animation, web design, interactive design, photography, information technology, and design studio practice. **NOTE:** *Advanced degrees may be required for some professions listed. A strong senior portfolio is very important in pursuing employment in design. There are opportunities for students to gain experience in design through part-time work on campus. Generally, perspective employers want to see examples of your work.*

## Who employs **GRAPHIC DESIGN** graduates?

Our students are working in television studios, advertising, design studios, print shops, marketing and design departments for a range of businesses, patient and provider health care education, multi-tainment centers, and data visualization and user experience companies.

# MAJOR MAP

**How to use this map:** Review the four categories and suggestions of activities and when you should consider engaging in them. Remember, these are just suggestions! There is a fillable space for you to add in any other ideas you have to set yourself up for success in life after college.

## Looking for a minor? Consider these options:

Art  
Communication  
Computer Information Systems  
Creative Writing

English  
History  
Marketing  
Philosophy

Professional Writing  
Sales and Marketing  
Visual Analytics for Decision Making

### 1st YEAR

### 2nd YEAR

### 3rd YEAR

### 4th YEAR

#### EXCEL IN ACADEMICS

Many first-year students will focus on the liberal studies requirements as well as introductory art courses. [Check out the Graphic Design 8-semester plan](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

Students in their second year will likely continue with liberal studies electives, intermediate Graphic Design courses topics, as well as introductory courses with their minor. [Check out the Graphic Design 8-semester plan](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

Third level courses focus on upper-level Graphic Design courses, special topics relating to your career path, or your chosen minor. [Check out the Graphic Design 8-semester plan](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

Courses in your final year will complete the major coursework requirement, concentration courses, as well as your chosen minor electives. Be sure to [Check out the Graphic Design 8-semester plan](#), make an appointment with your advisor, complete your degree audit, and [apply for graduation!](#)

#### GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Check out [WCU's DegreePlus program](#) and choose which events in any of the four categories you want to attend. Categories include: Professionalism, Teamwork, Leadership, or Cultural Responsiveness.

See what on-campus employment opportunities are available by logging in to JobCat via your MyWCU.

Get involved with student clubs and organizations.

If you are thinking about attending a graduate school, start engaging in hands-on experiences required in graduate school admissions.

Engage deeper with [DegreePlus](#); choose an additional competency to complete

Apply for internship experiences that will give you practical and hands-on experience to put on a resume.

Start building your online portfolio to showcase the works of art you have created.

Consider networking with professionals in your field at national or regional professional conferences such as the [American Institute for Graphic Arts online events](#).

Investigate requirements for full-time jobs. Assess what skills or experiences you're lacking and invest time in seeking additional opportunities such as certification programs, classes, or professional development workshops during your last year to fill that gap. Connect with your faculty advisor or career counselor.

#### BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Connect with the [Center for Service Learning](#) and ask about the [Spark Award](#), a program aimed to encourage students to be connected with their community.

Job shadow with professionals in the career area you wish to pursue.

Volunteer with area non-profits or organizations which interest you.

Consider the [study abroad programs related to Studio Art](#). Talk with a study abroad advisor about targeted experience for your areas of interest.

Develop deeper relationships with the organizations for which you volunteer. Ask for special projects or responsibilities that you can highlight on a resume.

Connect with alumni in your field through [LinkedIn](#)

Join professional organizations such as the [American Institute for Graphic Arts](#), [Society of Illustrators](#), [Society for Experimental Design](#).

Network with employers and non-profits at the annual Career Fair Plus event, held each October and February.

#### PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

Further explore your career options or career interests using the [Center for Career and Professional Development's](#) online resources, [Focus 2](#), and [Onet Online](#).

Connect with a career counselor early on to explore opportunities and experiences you can do while in college to further develop your professional resume.

Check out [CCPD's list of career-building activities](#) and participate in an activity this year, such as attending Career Fair Plus.

Start a spreadsheet of graduate schools, if applicable, you wish to apply to in a few years with their admission requirements so that you are aware of the expectations.

Visit the CCPD to hone your professional resume and cover letter. Apply for internships. Utilize the [Writing and Learning Commons](#) for GRE, and other professional exam preparation sessions. Use [Big Interview](#) to learn more about professional interviews.

Schedule a visit to tour graduate schools of your choice, if applicable.

Apply to graduate schools, if applicable.

Look for and apply for jobs between 4 and 6 months before graduation.

Polish your resume, cover letter, and interview skills by visiting the [CCPD](#).

Internships are still the number-one educational experience employers look for in a recent college graduate resume. (Chronicle of Higher Education's study on 50,000 employers)

#### DID YOU KNOW?

# MORE INFORMATION

## INTERNSHIP Information

At Western Carolina University there are numerous internship opportunities for students. In some cases internships are established through a faculty member in the student's major. Oftentimes students find part-time jobs in an area related to their field of study. When this happens, students should discuss with their academic advisor the possibility of receiving college credit. Generally, three hours of general elective credit can be earned for a minimum of 200 hours of experience.

The graphic design internship requirement strengthens the ability of graduates to excel in competitive professional opportunities. Student successes working within the design professions after graduation include employment as: graphic designers within design studios, healthcare and marketing, motion designers, animators, IT support technicians, web designers, and interaction designers.

## SKILLS LEARNED in the classroom

WCU's Design curriculum focuses on developing core competencies in a wide range of design related practices such as:

- Motion design
- Interactive design
- Experience design
- Design thinking
- Illustration design
- Animation
- User research
- Print, 3D and screen-based media
- Team-based production and problem solving
- Visual communication
- Creative problem-solving

## KNOWLEDGE Base

This program will prepare students to:

- Understand principles of art and design, communication design and semiotics
- Address contemporary design issues
- Use knowledge and skills in the use of tools and technology sufficient to work from concept to finished product
- Conduct creative and scholarly research and to write and speak about art and design
- Use a broad knowledge of the history, philosophy and professional practices of art

## Professional RESOURCES

- The American Institute of Graphic Arts: [www.aiga.org](http://www.aiga.org)
- College Arts Association: [www.collegeart.org](http://www.collegeart.org)
- Design Principles and Practices International Research Network: [designprinciplesandpractices.com](http://designprinciplesandpractices.com)
- Association Typographique Internationale: [www.atypi.org](http://www.atypi.org)
- ACM SIGGRAPH, Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques: [www.siggraph.org](http://www.siggraph.org)
- New Media Caucus, an international non-profit association formed to promote the development and understanding of new media art: [www.newmediacaucus.org](http://www.newmediacaucus.org)

## QUESTIONS?

For questions, please call the Graphic Design program at 828-227-2463 or visit [wcu.edu/learn/programs/graphic-design-bfa/index.aspx](http://wcu.edu/learn/programs/graphic-design-bfa/index.aspx)

To schedule an appointment with a career counselor, contact the Center for Career and Professional Development, 828-227-7133 or [careerservices@wcu.edu](mailto:careerservices@wcu.edu).