To provide a comprehensive comparison, we will incorporate the additional data provided into our analysis of the Master of Science programme in Digital Design at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). This comparison will now include four versions: two pre-application versions (March 11, 2023, and the last edit before March 1, 2023), the post-application version (December 2023-January 2024), and the actual experience.

https://web.archive.org/web/diff/20230311171632/20230922075751/https://www.amsterdamuas.com/programmes/master-digital-design/programme-structure

https://web.archive.org/web/diff/20230311171642/20230205081122/https://www.amsterdamuas.com/programmes/master-digital-design

Version 1: Information as of March 11, 2023 (11 Days After Deadline for International Students)

Semester 1

You start your study with a week-long introduction, usually a retreat in Belgium, where you get to know your new colleagues and teaching staff. Next to your classes, in this first period, you are grouped in teams of four and work in 2 real-life briefs. You close off this semester with assessments in January.

Semester 2

In February, you are ready to start with the second part of your programme. You will be working on your third team project of the year. After your final assessments, you'll enjoy showcasing your best projects at our end of the year exhibition and will have fun at an exclusive dinner for agencies, partners and students.

→ **See the complete curriculum**

Programme

Our 1-year full-time programme is based in bustling Amsterdam - home to several of the world's leading design agencies. During your study, you'll work on exciting real-life design briefs in a studio setting within an international and multidisciplinary team.

The Master's programme in Digital Design is centred around 4 main areas of expertise: Literacy, Research, Creation, and Strategy. It also involves 3 projects, as well as a closing exhibition. In addition, the programme often invites established names of the design world for guest-lectures and workshops, and organises after-school events such as meetups.

Courses, projects and events partially overlap during the academic year, enabling you to establish your own connections between topics and to apply your competences in a studio setting. Each area of expertise is linked to a track, attendance to all of which is compulsory.

Four tracks of expertise

Literacy

The Literacy track focuses on methodologies for understanding, communicating, and critiquing a variety of design solutions, their uses and their socio-economical contexts. Its foundational course is Design Thinking. Intensive workshops will touch on topics such as Interaction Design, Experience Design and Interactive Storytelling, and other workshops may be organised to follow on from students' needs and requests.

Research

The Research track focuses on users and their needs, experiences, habits, and desires. It synthesises models, best practices, and general 'Design Knowledge'. Its foundational course is Design Research. Intensive workshops will touch on topics such as User Research and Field Research, and other workshops may be organised to follow on from students' needs and requests.

Creation

The Creation track deals with prototyping, making and crafting digital artefacts, as well as programming how they interact with users, society and other objects. Its foundational course is Interaction Engineering. Intensive workshops will touch on specific techniques.

Strategy

The Strategy track examines the 'social life' of design artefacts, their relation to the market and consumers, as well as their impact on future scenarios. Its foundational course is Design Ethics. Intensive workshops will touch on topics such as Business Modelling, Digital Disruption, and Future Service Design, and other workshops may be organised to follow on from students' needs and requests.

Project

The Project track deals with practical real-world assignments co-created with a network of industry partners. This track constitutes the backbone of the programme, and connects all the previous ones. The 3 projects are fast-paced, interactive design challenges of 6, 12 and 20 weeks respectively. They differ in duration, complexity and coaching intensity, as well as in the number of stakeholders involved. Project briefs reflect societal challenges, which you will work on under the supervision of the 'client' (project partner).

Assessments

You are evaluated in 2 summative assessments (midterm and end), for 30 ECTs each. The 2 summative assessments consider all the tracks of the programme, with deliverables and indicators specified in the course catalogue. Other formative assessments are provided by each lecturer through feedback given throughout the tracks.

For detailed information about the courses for this programme, please refer to the course catalogue ↗.

Program Focus: Four main areas of expertise - Literacy, Research, Creation, Strategy.

Course Structure:
- Design Thinking, Interaction Design, Experience Design, Interactive Storytelling.
- User Research, Field Research.
- Interaction Engineering.
- Design Ethics, Business Modelling, Digital Disruption, Future Service Design.

Project Track: Three projects of 6, 12, and 20 weeks with industry partners, focusing on societal challenges.

Assessments: Two summative assessments for 30 ECTs each, considering all tracks.

Version 2: Information as of Last Edit Before March 1, 2023

Program Focus: Four main areas of expertise - Research, Design Processes, Ethics, Making.

Project Track: Practical assignments with industry and research partners, varying durations and complexities.

Assessments: Similar to the March 11 version, with emphasis on individual study plan (ISP).

Version 3: Information Available as of December 2023-January 2024

The Master's programme in Digital Design is centred around 4 main areas of expertise: Research, Design processes, Ethics and Making. It also involves 3 projects, as well as a closing exhibition. In addition, the programme often invites established names of the design world for guest-lectures and workshops, and organises after-school events such as meetups.

Courses, projects and events partially overlap during the academic year, enabling you to establish your own connections between topics and to apply your competences in a studio setting. Each area of expertise is linked to a track, attendance to all of which is compulsory.

Project

The Project track deals with practical real-world assignments co-created with a network of industry partners and research partners. This track constitutes the backbone of the programme, and connects all the previous ones. The 3 projects are fast-paced, interactive design challenges of varying durations. They differ in complexity and coaching intensity, as well as in the number of stakeholders involved. Project briefs reflect societal challenges, which you will work on under the supervision of the 'client' (project partner).

Assessments

You are evaluated in 2 summative assessments (midterm and end), for 30 ECTS each. The 2 summative assessments consider all the tracks of the programme and your individual study plan (ISP) with deliverables and indicators specified in the course catalogue. Other formative assessments are provided by each lecturer through feedback given throughout the tracks.

Title and Diploma

After successfully completing the Digital Design programme, you will be awarded the title of Master of Science (M.Sc.), at the Postgraduate Level 7 of the Dutch Qualification Framework (NLQF).

Program Focus: Evolving playgrounds (emerging ecologies, interactions, futures), educational tracks in ethics, research, making, and process.
Course Structure: More emphasis on bespoke projects, masterclasses, and portfolio development.
Project Track: Continued focus on practical assignments with industry partners.

Actual Experience (2023-2024)

Course Structure: Intensive two-month course with weekly project delivery, no breaks.
Exhibitions: Multiple exhibitions, including one at the end of the foundation course.
Project Timeline: Continuous projects with varying durations and lack of clarity on content.
Agency Interaction: Limited to feedback on university-defined projects, not direct collaboration.

Summary of Differences

- Focus and Content: Shift from specific areas of expertise (like Literacy, Research, Creation, Strategy) to broader and more dynamic themes (emerging ecologies, interactions, futures).
- Course Structure: Original descriptions suggested a varied and balanced workload, whereas the actual experience was more intensive with continuous projects.
- Project Track: Initial information indicated diverse and detailed projects with industry partners. In reality, the projects were university-defined with limited industry interaction.
- Assessments: The emphasis on individual study plans (ISP) was not prominently reflected in the actual experience.

Professional Implications

The discrepancies between the program's advertised content and structure and the actual experience could lead to misaligned expectations among students. While the program remains dynamic and evolving, the intensity and nature of the workload, along with the level of industry interaction, were not as initially portrayed. It is crucial for the AUAS to provide accurate, detailed, and consistent information about its programs to ensure that prospective students have a clear understanding of what to expect. This alignment is essential for maintaining the program's reputation and for the students' academic satisfaction and career preparedness.

Amsterdam Talent Scholarship (ATS)
The Amsterdam Talent Scholarship (ATS) details stipulate that it is awarded to non-EEA students at the end of each academic year. …… and achieving all 60 credits for the year with a minimum grade average of 7.0. **This information led students to assume a numeric grading system.**

The Amsterdam Talent Scholarship (ATS) currently requires a numeric grade for eligibility. However, AUAS is contemplating a transition to a pass/fail grading system, which has yet to be finalized. If this change occur, will the criteria for ATS eligibility be reevaluated? will new guidelines be provided to ensure students understand how to apply for the scholarship under the new system?

Amsterdam Talent Scholarship (ATS)

The Amsterdam Talent Scholarship is awarded at the end of every academic year to successful non-EEA students who have been enrolled in a programme at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. The Amsterdam Talent Scholarship will cover fifty percent of the institutional tuition fee.

Please note that the requirements for the ATS Scholarship will change for the academic year 2024/2025. The new requirements will be communicated by mid October.

Eligibility criteria
An applicant must meet the eligibility criteria for the ATS. The applicant should:

- Be able to meet the conditions to obtain a Dutch visa (if applicable)
- Be enrolled in a programme at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
- Have paid the institutional tuition fee for non-EEA students
- Not receive a full coverage scholarship covering the same period of study
- Have obtained all 60 credits* in the completed academic year, with a minimum average grade of 7.0

* Students at the European School of Physiotherapy (ESP) should have obtained all credits relevant to their academic year schedule.