

MSc/MA Psychology of the Arts



Programme Overview

The programme explores how human perception, cognition and emotion interact with artistic and creative experiences in the physical and digital worlds.

Students will develop a deep understanding of the processes of perception, cognition, creativity, and emotion, and explore how these insights can be applied to the arts. This course is designed for a broad range of professionals, such as psychologists, neuroscientists, visual artists, designers, architects, musicians, performers, curators, art therapists, User Experience (UX) design (and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) specialists and art-wellbeing practitioners who want to combine research and practice to generate knowledge, inform creative work, and make a real-world difference.

Key areas of study:

- Perception, Cognitive Processes, and Aesthetic Experience
- Creativity, Brain, and Body
- Arts, Wellbeing, Neurodiversity and Community
- Curation, Spectorship, and Decision-Making
- Psychology of Marketing, Communication, and Design
- UX Research and Human Performance

**You will graduate with either an MSc, supported by an empirical dissertation, or an MA, supported by a practice-based research project or a theoretical dissertation.*

Key Information

Award: MA/MSc Psychology of the Arts

Study Mode: Full-time or Part-time

Duration: 12 months full-time; 27 months part-time.

Intake: September

Entry Criteria: A minimum of a Second-Class Honours degree in Psychology, Fine Arts, Music, Performing Arts or a related subject awarded by a UK university, or an equivalent higher education qualification.

For students whose first language is not English there is a language requirement of IELTS 6.0 overall (reading 5.5, writing 5.5). In addition to this, we also accept a wide range of International Qualifications.

Fees and Funding: For tuition fee information, please go to the Student Finance pages at www.hope.ac.uk/postgraduate/

How to Apply: For details on the application process visit: www.hope.ac.uk/postgraduate/howtoapply

School: Psychology

Contact Details:

Student Recruitment,
courses@hope.ac.uk

Disclaimer: Information is correct at time of print, however programme details can change.

Curriculum

The course spans across four modules which run during two days per week.

Module 1 (40 credits): 1 lecture (2 hours); 2 practical components (2 hours each)

The module examines how people perceive, think, feel, and respond to art and creative forms. It will explore how perceptual, cognitive, and emotional processes interact with the context of the experience and with individual differences to shape engagement and aesthetic responses. Students consider psychological processes across a variety of media, including visual art, design, music, performance, video games, natural and immersive environments. The module comprises two practical components: one focusing on behavioural, neuroscience-based, and digital research methods, and the other on project management, including the preparation of funding proposals.

Module 2 (40 credits): 1 lecture (2 hours); 2 practical components (2 hours each)

The module engages theoretically and practically with the arts and is split into two main areas of investigation. Firstly, we will explore notions of perception, including the intersection of creativity, the body and the brain. As part of this enquiry, we will study and apply how the arts employ different sensory modes such as sight, sound, touch, smell, taste and body awareness. The second area of investigation examines artistic responses and is asking why we create and how we respond to environment and socio-cultural circumstances. Specific foci will be on creative health, communication, marketing, advertising and curation in museums and galleries. Parallel and in response to the investigation of perception and response, we will consider themes of Aesthetics, for example the role of beauty, taste, values and ethics.

Module 3 (40 credits): Research methods

The module presents two series of workshops. Series 1 gives students practical skills in data analysis, experimental design, and evaluation methods, including UXD and HCI approaches to measure human

performance. Students learn to collect, interpret, and apply data across diverse contexts. Series 2 gives students the opportunity to engage practically with an area of artistic practice of their choice to explore advanced skills of making, producing and creating.

Dissertation (60 credits)

Students complete either an empirical dissertation (MSc) or a practice-based/theoretical dissertation (MA), supervised by one academic from Psychology and one from Creative Arts and Humanities. Projects can take place in lab, real-world, or digital settings and can include related performances, compositions, exhibitions or installations. It could include working with museums, galleries, charities, or creative businesses. Example research questions include: How do design elements in digital media affect cognition, decision-making, and user experience? Can community art projects enhance wellbeing and social cohesion? How does immersive digital art shape emotional engagement and cognitive processing compared to traditional art? The module covers proposal development, ethical approval, and project completion. Students submit a written thesis and present in a mini viva during a networking event, receiving feedback and building connections for careers in the arts, creative industries, or research.

Teaching and Research

The course is interdisciplinary. It is taught by tutors from both scientific and artistic backgrounds drawn from the School of Psychology and the School of Creative and Performing Arts. This close integration of science and the arts shapes both the content and the pedagogy of the course, with research activity directly informing teaching and ensuring students benefit from cutting-edge, research-led learning alongside hands-on practical experience. The Vision and Cognition Research Group in the School of Psychology brings together expertise in empirical aesthetics, attention, face perception, perception and action, spatial navigation, and motor control. Our technical skills include behavioural experiments, eye tracking,

EEG, and psychophysiological methods to study cognition and the underlying brain processes. Interdisciplinary research in the School of Creative and Performing Arts comprises clusters such as arts, health and wellbeing; arts and public engagement; arts and digital creativity; ecologies, cultures and Posthumanism; heritage and culture; and transdisciplinary creative practice. We follow Open Science practices, generate societal impact, and actively engage in knowledge exchange.

Much of the research in both schools is conducted with external stakeholders such as TATE Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Dot-Art, Culture Liverpool, Sefton Council, National Trust, Merseyside Forest.

Future Career Opportunities

Graduates of this course are equipped to apply expertise from psychology, cognitive neuroscience and creative practice across art, design, media, music, performance, cultural and wellbeing contexts. You will gain the skills to develop, evaluate and implement creative projects, exhibitions, urban and spatial designs, or wellbeing initiatives that engage audiences, shape experience, and promote societal impact. This will prepare you for advanced research, including PhD study, or careers in the cultural, creative and digital sectors where evidence-based understanding of human perception, emotion, and engagement is key. You will develop transferable skills that boost employability in highly competitive sectors, including critical thinking, research, digital literacy, creative problem solving, communication, project management, grant-writing and fundraising.



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HOPE
UNIVERSITY**

CONTACT

T: +44 (0)151 291 3111

E: courses@hope.ac.uk

www.hope.ac.uk