**Application support for design courses**

We use your application to decide whether you are likely to succeed on the course. Before we offer you a place, we usually also interview you and view your portfolio of work. This is because the quality of your creative work, your communication skills and your understanding of design are very difficult to assess from qualifications and a short written statement.

Interviews are an important part of the application process and will normally be held in Sheffield, but if you are in another country you may be interviewed by a Sheffield Hallam University staff member if they are visiting your country or we may be able to interview you by telephone or e-mail.

The main things we want to find out from you application are

**Design skills**In your portfolio, we expect to see a range of good design skills and presentation appropriate to your background. It is important that applicants have previous education or experience in the design discipline they wish to study on the MA and we will be looking for a professional standard of work.

**Technical knowledge**  
We expect you to demonstrate a good knowledge of the technologies relevant to your design discipline.

**Imagination and creativity**   
We want to see clear evidence that you can think in an imaginative way and develop appropriate, creative responses to the design problems and situations that you have been faced with.

**Written communication**We wish to see evidence that you can present ideas and information clearly and intelligently in writing. It would be helpful if you could bring or make available to us one or two examples of written work, such as research reports, essays, dissertations or business reports.

**Verbal communication**On the MA you need to present your ideas to tutors, students, professionals and business people as well as taking part in discussions and group work. We want to see that you can express yourself clearly and take an active part in discussion.

**Professional practice experience**You have some professional experience in design or a related field, we want to know about that and find out what you have achieved and understood.

**Contextual understanding**This is one of the most important issues. We want to find out how well you understand the context of your work. A designer must be able to develop a rich understanding of the circumstances surrounding their work and the factors which affect its success.

**Appropriate expectations**We want to know what you expect to achieve on the course and make sure that you understand the challenges inherent in postgraduate study.

**Critical position**We want to find out if you are a person who can take an intelligent, independent view of ideas, situations, objects and problems.

**MA Project proposal**

As part of the application process we require an MA Project proposal. We want to find out what aspects of design you are interested in developing whilst on the MA. Using section 9 of the SHU application form (Further information in support of your application) please include a section that tell us about the opportunities or problems that you would like to work on and the broad context(s) that will inform your MA study. We don't expect you to have a highly developed project plan rather we want you to write approx 250 words + any relevant references. This is in addition to any other information you wish to put in section 9.

For example, are you interested in developing work carried out whilst on your undergraduate degree or within your professional practice? Are you looking to investigate materials or processes? Are you interested in co-design, collaborative, open or sustainable design? Is there an important problem you would like to address or are you wanting to find new ways to collaborate with business or industry? These are just a few of the possible directions MA projects might take. If you are offered a place on the course, you will fully develop your interests into an MA project proposal during your first semester of study.

**Your portfolio**

All applicants are expected to show us a portfolio of creative work which helps us to assess their creative and visual thinking. You normally bring the portfolio to your interview. If you are applying from another country and unable to travel to interview in the UK send us a PDF version of your portfolio or a link to your online folio.

Your portfolio should contain examples of design work and any other creative work which may be relevant to your application. We will be looking for evidence of professional knowledge and skills, good written and visual communication and, especially, good creative thinking evident through examples showing your design process.

All work in the portfolio should have clear descriptive text saying what the images show, what was the project brief/context for the work and what were the main points you aimed to address in the work. You should also indicate when and in what circumstances the work was done for example BA, professional practice etc. Your portfolio may be reviewed in your absence so make sure your text and images tell us the project stories so we can clearly understand it.

We are interested to see examples of the development process that went into your work, as well as the final outcome, we will also be looking at the level of organisation and communication skill which went into preparation of the portfolio.

**Project examples**

**Design in depth**Many students set out to explore a field of activity or knowledge to discover an opportunity for new designs, which have a significant effect on the people who use a product and the success of a company which produces it.

This goes well beyond the usual approach of working to a design brief by putting the designer in the driving seat of innovation. David Allan investigated sports science and the dangers of dehydration to discover and develop ideas which could make a big difference to the health and performance of athletes. Mark Fisher focussed his MA project on improving the lives of a asthma sufferers thorough improved inhaler design and medication delivery. He now works for the Universitys User-centred Healthcare Design research centre.

**Become an expert**By concentrating on a specific area of human activity or technology, a designer can greatly strengthen their chances of finding the job they want. Tim Fish used the MA to build on his knowledge of designing for outdoor pursuits. He went on to work for Berghaus, one of the top companies in this field and has since left there and established his own highly successful design consultancy.

**Leadership**You may be an experienced designer who wants to make the jump into a more strategic leading role in your profession. Simon Cran gained the knowledge he needed to become a design manager in the multinational company Adtranz.