

# Information on the Reorganisation of the Department of Design, Kyoto City University of Arts

The Department of Design, Faculty of Fine Arts, Kyoto City University of Arts will switch to a new structure in the academic year of 2023.

Specifically, the department will integrate its existing three courses – Visual Design, Environmental Design and Product Design – into one at the same time as creating a course in a new field, thereby switching to a two-course structure.

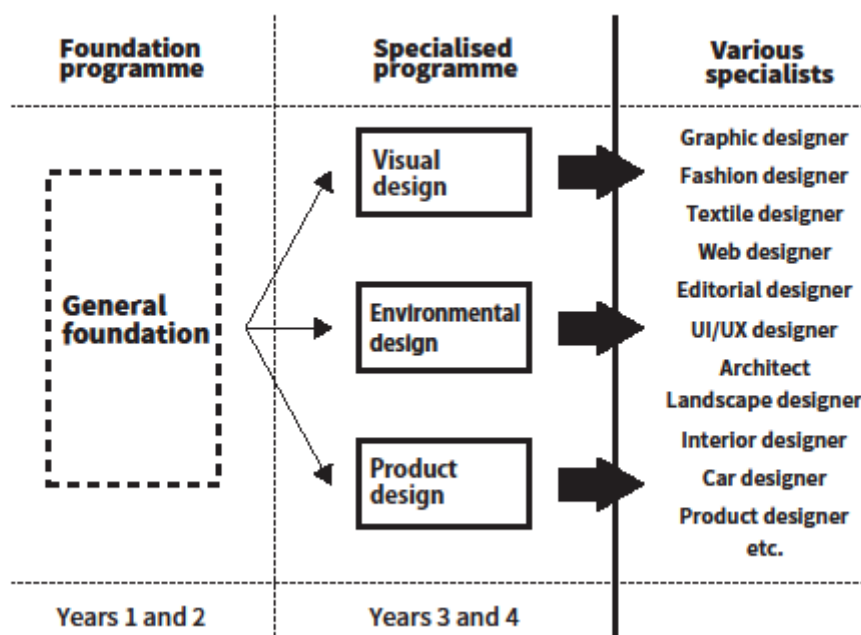
## 1. History

Kyoto City University of Arts (KCUA) has its roots in the Kyoto Prefectural School of Painting founded in 1880, which makes KCUA the oldest public art university in Japan.

The Department of Design at KCUA originated in 1939 as a design department at Kyoto City Technical School of Painting. From 1950 onwards, it carved out a unique position in Japanese design education by adopting the basic framework of modern design education, where students start from a foundation programme and move on to a specialised one. It also placed a high value on the expression and sense influenced by Wiener Werkstätte under the expert guidance of the late professors Felice “Lizzie” Rix-Ueno and Isaburo Ueno.

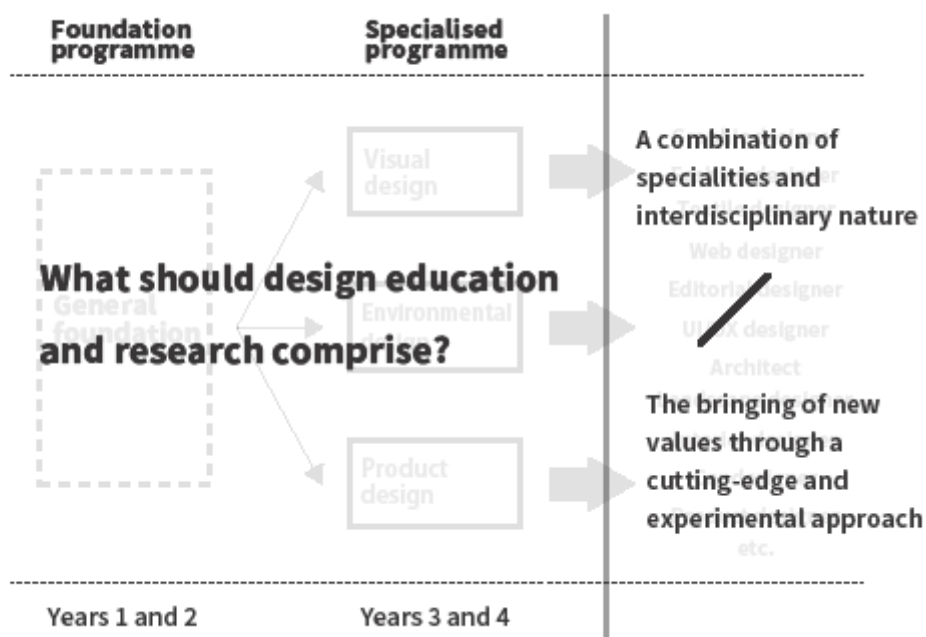
Since its establishment in 1982, the Department of Design has provided design education via a course structure that helps students develop into specialists in various design fields. Specifically, Years 1 and 2 study general foundation subjects in design, and from Year 3, students are divided into three specialised courses – Visual Design, Environmental Design and Product Design.

## 2. Challenges



In recent years, different fields have paid attention to how to generate design ideas and ways of thinking about design. Designers now play a role in a wider area, covering intangible things, e.g. the creation of local communities or online services, thereby fundamentally changing the social significance of design.

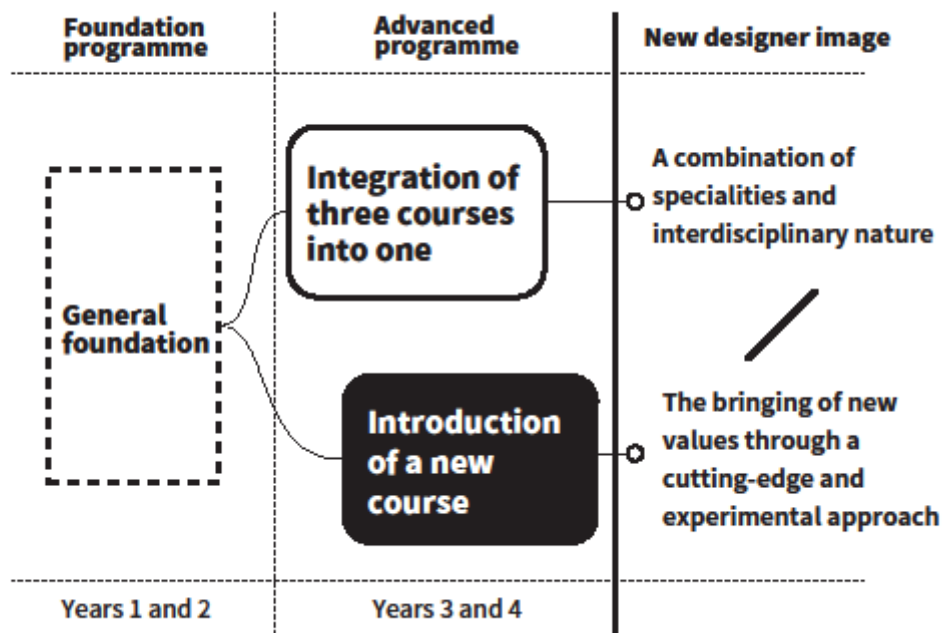
In this context, today's society is deemed to need not only specialists, such as architects and graphic or product designers, but also designers who work flexibly and across different fields. We are potentially at a turning point in design education and should therefore update it in response to this change in the times. We also face environmental problems and various other social issues as we live in the present day. Needless to say, design is deeply involved in production, consumption and other activities within our social system. So, what should design do to respond to the challenges that we as humankind should tackle? KCUA will seriously respond to these challenges as a provider of design education and a place to conduct advanced experiments and research.



### 3. Reorganisation

Since 1980, KCUA has been based in Oekutsukake-cho, Nishikyo Ward. In 2023, it will be entirely relocated to the Sujin area to the east of JR Kyoto Station. A new campus has been planned with the idea of questioning anew the conception of today's art universities. Along with its relocation, KCUA will reform its educational and research environment in all dimensions. In the academic year of 2014, the Department of Design employed an additional full-time faculty member in preparation for its future and assigned him to the Visual Design course. In creating its future organisation, the department first considered the possibility of integrating its multiple courses into one and then explored various organisational structures. In the academic year of 2017, it formed a team to discuss its vision for the future and has since reviewed the curriculum that has been followed for around half a century while creating a master plan for the new campus.

Now, the department will respond to social demands, which require collaboration across different areas of expertise and an interdisciplinary approach, by integrating the three existing courses into one, namely 'Integrated Design Specialities'. It will also introduce 'design B', a new course where students will take a more experimental and cutting-edge approach, going beyond existing frameworks and concepts. By running these two distinctive organisations, the department will develop a structure that can constantly incorporate various specialities and new values in preparation for the rapidly changing future society. Through its reorganisation, it will also aim to become a design department that can continue to educate and research fresh designs.



### 3.1. Integrated Design Specialities

#### Working across different specialities | Integrating the existing three courses into one |

In the basic framework of modern design education, students start from a foundation programme and move on to a specialised one. Based on this, the Department of Design has run courses by speciality – visual design for flat surfaces, environmental design for spaces and product design for three dimensions. As the most effective means of developing design skills from basic to applied design, this speciality-focused education will continue to be part of solid education and research in design education at KCUA. However, new fields of design have emerged in recent years, such as community design and service design. These new fields require designers to have expertise in multiple fields, flexibly come up with ideas and be able to engage with people, things and the environment across different fields. Thus, the Department of Design will reorganise to ease the division of students by speciality by integrating the three existing courses into one, namely ‘Integrated Design Specialities’, in which a range of specialised seminars will be held.

The cross-seminar curriculum of the Integrated Design Specialities course allows students to develop their expertise, mainly in their chosen seminars, while simultaneously working on projects in collaboration with students in other fields. Through this, students aim to develop the ability to deliver a high level of comprehensive design.

#### About the course name, ‘Integrated Design Specialities’

The specialities for which design is required in society have diversified over the years. This is making it increasingly difficult to divide design into existing fields, such as visual, environmental or product design. Furthermore, in identifying and solving various social issues, different specialities are often now required to fuse together and collaborate to create a design and offer a solution in an integrated manner. This way of thinking is becoming a growing trend in the field of design research. For example, Tama Art University established the Department of Integrated Design in 2014. Other instances include the School of Integrated Design Engineering at Keio University and the Holistic Design course (the word holistic comes from the Greek word holos, meaning ‘entire’) at Kanazawa College of Art, which is scheduled to reorganise in the

academic year of 2023. Through its reorganisation, the Department of Design aims to build an education and research base with long-term stability. The course has been named 総合デザイン (integrated design) in Japanese, considering that a commonly used expression is desirable for its title. The English title, 'Integrated Design Specialities', has been chosen as it clearly communicates the way of thinking about design that is realised by different specialities fusing together and collaborating with each other.

## 3.2. design B

### **Bringing new values | Introducing a new cutting-edge and experimental course |**

Modern times have seen a wide range of efforts made to improve society, from industrialisation to internationalisation and the recent advancement of informatisation. These advances have resulted in humans living increasingly convenient and affluent lives. However, modernisation has caused environmental problems and various other social issues, which are posing serious challenges for how we approach the future as we live in the present day. Needless to say, designers are deeply involved in production and consumption, thus playing a role in social issues. Therefore, the Department of Design will introduce 'design B', a new course where students will explore the potential of design to address these social issues by taking a more experimental and cutting-edge approach, going beyond existing frameworks and concepts. Students can choose their units under different themes. They will tackle various problems that cannot be addressed within existing design fields and learn to extend the meaning and role of design. As players paving the way for the future, students will develop the ability to discover unknown and unsolved issues in society and pursue original, innovative and critical design without restricting themselves to using traditional design techniques. They will also learn to think for themselves and undergo the entire design process, from designing a concept to finding practical solutions.

#### **About the course name, 'design B'**

The 'B' in the course name, design B, has been taken from 'becoming', which refers to a state of flux. It is deemed to be an appropriate expression to depict how we modify ourselves as needed or describe how design newly emerges, evolves and changes.

More importantly, we benefit from not specifying design outputs or defining the conception of design. In the new course, we will experimentally explore the construction of a design education system that can continue to adapt to changes and search for a new and constantly changing form of social implementation. 'Becoming' is purposely abbreviated to 'B' because the course is intended for students who can put themselves in an environment where they do not know what they will learn; that is, those who can take a proactive approach to creating their own learning and who are willing to take on such a challenge. It is hoped that the design B course will enable students to develop the ability to survive and design in an uncertain and complex modern society.