

V1.1	Development Dialogue Master Digital Design
What	This document summarizes the Development Dialogue of the Master Digital Design (MDD). This summary will be published on the official website of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). The members of this dialogue have agreed upon the content of this summary, representing the essence of the conversation.
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Robson: Head of the school of design, Northumbria University, UK / chairperson assessment panel MDD • Gabriele Ferri: Head of program MDD, lecturer • Paul Geurts: Program coordinator MDD, lecturer • Liselotte Slagman: Educational Advisor faculty, note taker
Date	05-07-2022 (site visit: 28-02-2022)

Introduction:

The M.Sc. Digital Design (MDD) underwent its first reaccreditation on February 28th, 2022, with positive results. The assessment panel held in-depth conversations with management, lecturers, external partners, and students of the program. The feedback was very positive overall, with panel members stating that they were impressed by the MDD. Nevertheless, the panel also listed some points requiring further attention in the final assessment report. The Development Dialogue, held on July 5th, 2022, is an opportunity to discuss them openly, ask for advice, and consider possible strategies for addressing them in the coming years.

Content of the Development Dialogue:

After considering the final assessment report, the following topics were selected for discussion:

1. Admission procedure (selecting students for the program)
2. Students wish for more flexibility in the curriculum
3. Assessment format and procedure
4. Involvement of external stakeholders (e.g., industry partners)

During the conversation, the topics followed each other seamlessly and were linked in several ways.

Content Summary of the Development Dialogue:

1. Admission procedure

The M.Sc. Digital Design identifies diversity as a critical value, and the assessment panel offered positive remarks. However, the need to scale up and streamline the admission procedure to cope with an increased number of applicants risks hindering the diversity of students in the program. The previous admission procedure includes a 45-minutes conversation with applicants, and the current one is based on a lengthy questionnaire and a shorter interview. We sought advice on balancing diversity and a more manageable admission process. Four points emerged:

- The program should continue to make visible its strong values and explicit principles, thus attracting a diverse student population;
- The program could look at Northumbria University's "communities of practice," where alumni and design practitioners are offered opportunities as "designers in residence." This helps attracting students, offering a realistic view of a graduate's profile at the end of the program. Designers in residence could also contribute to the admission process, bringing their perspective.
- The program could connect more with industry, perhaps offering a part-time curriculum tailored to students/workers who are employed part-time and also attend the MDD. This could be a professional

development opportunity for industry partners to offer junior employees. While this would contribute to diversity in some ways (e.g., in terms of professional experience), it could also hinder it in others (e.g., if an industry partner employs primarily white males).

- The program could consider granting exemptions to applicants to value all the work experience (e.g., a student with previous experience might not have to take the whole exams).

2. Students wish for more flexibility in the curriculum

We heard (in the panel visit, in the NSE...) that some students wish for more flexibility in the curriculum, but – as the M.Sc. Digital Design is a 1-year program – we recognize that there is not much space for personalized offers. We sought advice on how to address this request. Four options were mentioned:

- The program could implement a structure of elective courses, but this increases the complexity of the whole organization;
- The program could look into “micro-credits,” as it has already been experimented within Northumbria. The university offers these professional certifications (e.g., an Adobe professional course) besides the standard program, extracurricular.
- The program could involve external stakeholders (e.g., industry partners) to provide masterclasses.
- The program could partner with research groups in the institution to offer “learning trajectories” and specializations.

3. Assessment format and procedure

According to the final assessment report, assessments are a topic that requires attention. The current model (two assessments in the year, each for 30ECs) is quite intense for both students and teachers. The rationale for this is that the M.Sc. Digital Design aims for a holistic evaluation, and it is crucial to place it carefully in the academic year: it takes time (1 semester) for students to show progress in their design work. What was discussed in our dialogue underlined the importance of formative feedback, possibly including formative assessments throughout the academic year. A downside of more frequent formative evaluations is that they would probably increase the workload for students and teachers. We examined how formative moments could contribute to the summative assessment, and we recognized that this poses a dilemma: on the one hand, summative assessments are meant to be holistic and consider the totality of a student’s work, and on the other hand there is the need to keep assessments manageable. Further work is certainly required on this point.

4. Involvement of external stakeholders (e.g., industry partners)

From 2022/23, selected external partners will contribute to the M.Sc. Digital Design as “industry coaches” for the students. They do not replace the teachers/coaches in the program but add their contributions. We sought advice on making this learning opportunity meaningful for the program’s students and how this could contribute to the assessment procedure. From the dialogue, it emerged that a significant percentage of staff at Northumbria University has previous industry experience. Integrating industry, academic, and technical staff provides students with valuable and relevant input. The advice is not just to invite external coaches into the program but truly engage them from the beginning in co-designing the learning outcomes.