

BFA DESIGN FOR PERFORMANCE

Course Overview 2026

First Year

Through classes, studio work and participation in NIDA productions, you will be introduced to the preliminary philosophies, concepts and practices required for stage, prop and costume design for theatre and screen performance.

SEMESTER ONE

DES7101A Design Studio A (10 credit points)

You will be introduced to the preliminary philosophies, concepts and practices required for stage, prop and costume design for theatre and screen performance. Through practical design projects focused on process, in-depth research and analysis, iterative conceptual thinking and hands-on enquiry, you will be equipped with the fundamental skills critical to design practice and introduced to the studio environment.

DES7102A Representation A (15 credit points)

You will be introduced to the core role of observation and representation in design practice. You will learn drawing, isographic drawing, vector-based drawing, life-drawing, model making, and other expanded approaches to representation. You will foster an understanding of these skills as a complex tool of inquiry to observe, document, and analyse information; represent spatial data; generate creative solutions; and communicate outcomes at all stages of design development.

DES7104A Dramaturgy and Analysis A (5 credit points)

You will explore the connection between research, analysis and dramaturgy in developing performance design concepts and rationales. Through consideration of dramaturgical frameworks — including spatial design, costume design, lighting, sound, staging, technology, movement, objects, and other aspects of performance — you will survey and interpret how meaning is created, communicated, and experienced in theatre and performance.

DES7105A Production Techniques A (15 credit points)

You will be introduced to the collaborative nature of live performance with specific focus on each discipline's role in these collaborations. You will work as design assistants and crew on NIDA's play productions and events, engaging with the fabrication and technical processes in workshops, rehearsals and backstage during technical rehearsals. In addition to these roles, you will learn about staging techniques including fundamental stage craft and machinery, lighting, sound and scenic art.

COM7101A Encountering Performance A (10 credit points)

The focus for this subject is how we respond to the performances we experience as audience members. Whether debriefing after a company run or brainstorming for inspiration, a core skill for all performing arts practitioners is sharing observations and reflections from works we have encountered in the past. In this subject, you learn interdisciplinary frameworks for discussing performances with others and transforming your audience experiences from immediate into considered, researched responses. This foundational appreciation for how audiences participate in all performances prepares you for the more technical, dramatic frameworks you will apply with peers in the Term 3 subject, Doing Dramaturgy.

COM7103A Wujara A (5 credit points)

Wujara encompasses two subjects that span the first year of study. You will be guided from a First Nations perspective towards concepts of interconnectivity, and you will practice deep listening, empathy, communication and collaboration. The focus of these subjects is to create the foundations for a long-term sustainable professional practice in the arts. You will be introduced to the foundational skills, vocabularies and processes which will underlie your ongoing engagement in the BFA courses, and the development of your practice as creative storytellers. This includes processes for ensuring safe and sustainable collaboration, as well as maintaining your health and wellbeing across your creative careers.

SEMESTER TWO

DES7101B Design Studio B (10 credit points)

You will advance your understanding of performance design and develop your capacity to interrogate and contextualise design problems, generate creative solutions, and communicate design outcomes with clarity. Creative stage and costume design projects will offer you the opportunity to explore dramaturgy, character, space, scale, colour, form, materiality and a range of design techniques and approaches to process.

DES7102B Representation B (15 credit points)

You will extend your understanding of representation as an active process for thinking and doing, integral to all design development. You will continue to consider and practice modes of representation with increasing complexity. These modes include drawing, digital drawing, model making, 2D and 3D vector-based drawing and modelling.

DES7104B Dramaturgy and Analysis B (5 credit points)

You will build on your understanding of dramaturgy as an analytical tool for interpreting and articulating ways in which performance can communicate with an audience. You will then apply this tool to your own projects. In order to extend and deepen your performance design thinking, you will perform focused research on topics and sign systems including history of performance, costume, fashion, art, and architecture.

DES7105B Production Techniques B (10 credit points)

You will expand your understanding of the production processes and workflows. Once more, you will take on roles as design assistants and crewing positions on NIDA's play productions and events, with a focus on creative problem-solving strategies, sustainability, time management, and communication within your practice.

DES7106B Story and Place B (5 credit points)

You will engage with symbols, protocols, knowledge, and technologies to understand and interact with First Nations' concepts of time, space and storytelling in ways that are culturally sensitive and appropriate. This subject focuses on enriching and deepening the possibilities of shared storytelling and performance practice for both First Nations and non-First Nations performers.

COM7101B Performance and Ideas B (10 credit points)

In the second semester of this subject you will begin to contextualise your own creative foundations as an emerging practitioner. You will develop your dramaturgical skills in order to articulate how meaning is made in performance for artists and audience.

COM7103B Wujara B (5 credit points)

Wujara encompasses two subjects that span the first year of study. You will be guided from a First Nations perspective towards concepts of interconnectivity, and you will practice deep listening, empathy, communication and collaboration. The focus of these subjects is to create the foundations for a long-term sustainable professional practice in the arts. You will be introduced to the foundational skills, vocabularies and processes which will underlie your

ongoing engagement in the BFA courses, and the development of your practice as creative storytellers. This includes processes for ensuring safe and sustainable collaboration, as well as maintaining your health and wellbeing across your creative careers.

Second Year

Working on a mix of studio projects and realised productions, you will build on your foundational skills and develop your design process, critical thinking and collaborative practice, and be introduced to the designer director relationship.

SEMESTER ONE

DES7201A Design Studio A (30 credit points)

You will build on your foundational skills in this subject that provides a mix of creative studio projects and staged theatre productions to consolidate your understanding of a broader and more diverse range of forms. These include techniques and processes for stage, costume, props, design, including lighting and video. You will explore alternative approaches to design practice with an emphasis on collaboration and the director designer relationship.

DES7204A Dramaturgy and Analysis A (5 credit points)

You will continue to develop your skills in analysis with a range of performance forms and modes. There will be a specific focus on visual dramaturgy, sign systems, spatial relationships, including the positioning of audience, the semiotic relationship of costume to clothing, and the potential of emerging technologies to shape performance.

DES7206A Story and Place A (5 credit points)

This subject recognises the value of First Nations knowledges and perspectives in fostering richer and more profound design practice. You will work with traditional knowledge holders, artists, and professionals with an ethos of active listening and reciprocity, to explore ideas and design responses informed by the practical experience of being guided on Country.

DES7207A Film Studio A (10 credit points)

You will receive an overview of the key screen industry roles of production designer, costume designer, and art director. With a focus on mise-en-scene and theory, and work on practical film projects, you will establish a foundational understanding of film grammar, dramaturgy, language, processes, equipment, and workflows and apply this to generate design concepts and solutions for screen.

COM7204A Staging Ideas A (10 credit points)

During this subject you will gain a theoretical and critical understanding of significant forms and conventions within the Modernist avant-garde. In being introduced to Modernism's artistic movements, you will also develop an understanding of the contextual influences that shaped these practices. This knowledge will help you to actively relate avant-garde practices to 21st century performance in a range of cultural contexts.

SEMESTER TWO

DES7201B Design Studio B (20 credit points)

You will continue to deepen your understanding of design practice. Studio projects and staged productions provide opportunities to work with student or guest directors to generate more complex design proposals and solutions through collaborative discussion. You will also learn what is required to document and communicate design concepts and intentions within a professional performance model.

DES7204B Dramaturgy and Analysis B (5 credit points)

You will continue the development of your skills in analysing a range of performance forms and modes with a specific focus on visual dramaturgy, sign systems, spatial relationships. This will include the positioning of audience, the semiotic relationship of costume to clothing, and the potential of emerging technologies to shape performance.

DES7205B Production Techniques B (10 credit points)

You will consider other disciplines, technologies and skills to question and extend your understanding of what constitutes a performance environment and the role of design within this.

DES7207B Film Studio B (10 credit points)

You will apply your developing skills to conceptual screen design projects and build on your experience by undertaking industry placements in art departments or costume departments on local film or tv productions.

COM7204B Contexts of Performance B (10 credit points)

You will engage in discussion and inquiry about the ideas and practices that inform contemporary performance in a variety of forms and contexts. This subject aims to develop

your knowledge of and critical response to 21st century contemporary performance practices.

COM7203B Student-Led Project B (5 credit points)

In interdisciplinary groups you will draw on the individual strengths, knowledge and abilities of each member to work together and deepen your understanding of collaborative practices and giving and receiving feedback. The creative outcome will reflect a work-in-progress experience as a demonstration, installation, interactive event, video/audio display or other form.

Third Year

You will be encouraged and supported to consider yourself as an independent practitioner applying increasingly complex design thinking and empathy to concept development and decision-making on realised productions, for both live and screen performance.

SEMESTER ONE

DES7308A Design Practice A (30 credit points)

You will build your pathway to industry in this subject. Undertaking key staging and costume design roles on NIDA's productions, you will consolidate your concept development, decision-making and problem-solving skills through a deeper knowledge of stage, costume, lighting, and video design, with an emphasis on effective collaboration. While being supported in this process, you will be encouraged to apply yourself with a high level of self-direction to work with others in a conscientious and autonomous manner.

DES7307A Film Practice A (20 credit points)

You will learn to consolidate knowledge of production design concepts and practices, screen language and experience in screen projects, with a focus on understanding cinematic dramaturgy. From storyboard to final edit, you will work independently and collaboratively in teams as production designers, art directors and costume designers to create, shoot and edit short films and music videos that communicate ideas, with a focus on visual storytelling.

DES7303A Design Professional Practice A (10 credit points)

In Professional Practice A you will learn about the role and responsibilities of being an ethical practitioner within the national arts and cultural landscape. You will be given a set of tools to enable you to shape a successful career as a designer and arts professional and negotiate the

demands and expectations of establishing yourself as an independent practitioner, small business and an effective collaborator. This will include a basic knowledge of financial and risk management, business and project planning frameworks, and how we conceive, articulate, and communicate our work.

SEMESTER TWO

DES7308B Design Practice B (30 credit points)

You will continue to build your pathway to industry in this subject. Undertaking key staging and costume design roles on NIDA's productions, you will consolidate your concept development, decision-making, and problem-solving skills through a deeper knowledge of stage, costume, lighting, and video design, with an emphasis on effective collaboration. While being supported in this process, you will be encouraged to apply yourself with a high level of self-direction to work with others in a conscientious and autonomous manner.

DES7307B Film Practice B (15 credit points)

You will extend your understanding of screen culture, as you continue your work on complex and demanding short film and music video projects. Through this work, you will be equipped with the flexibility, knowledge, and skills to negotiate a creative career in the screen and associated industries as production and costume designers, art directors and set decorators.

DES7303B Design Professional Practice B (15 credit points)

Through mentoring, guided classwork, and the opportunity to complete industry placements Professional Practice B aims to help you build a strong understanding of your own professional identity and encourage you to act in an inclusive, ethical, and culturally literate manner within an autonomous creative practice and as a valuable contributor to the performance and cultural landscape.