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DESIGN RESEARCH IN THE MASTER PROGRAMME

The main focus of the Master Design programme is to conduct design research. The programme is structured according to the *Design Research* learning line and the *New Practices* learning line. The various lectures and workshops allow you to gain insight into your own design research.

This part-time programme has a study workload of approximately 20 hours per week, and is classified as a low-residency master programme. This means that your physical presence at the academy is limited. You are required to be present for classes once every two weeks. All information relevant to the study programme will be communicated through an online learning environment. Maintaining a personal research blog is an important part of your research process. You will receive different kinds of coaching, and come into contact with various types of experts during the study programme. The study programme is concluded with a final product or project, a publication, and a final assessment.

THE SELF-DEFINED DESIGN QUESTION

The education programme teaches you to independently conduct research according to a specific methodology. Your starting point is determined by your own field of interest and professional practice, and focuses on formulating a self-defined design question.

The methodology provided by the education programme allows you to find, apply, tweak or

design methods that are relevant to your specific design question. The design research can be conducted within a variety of research domains. These may be related to social, artistic and cultural knowledge domains; they may involve participation; they may focus on design itself, or on researching evolving processes within design practices. However, your design research should always be relevant to your professional peers, and will be published with the goal of providing them with information.

DESIGN AS A MEANS OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Each design research is unique. The curriculum of the master programme focuses on an iterative process that allows you to sharpen your question, to strengthen your theoretical foundation, to come into contact with experts and participants, to research your visualisation and materialisation, to design your methods and to continuously share your narrative.

Design is part of each phase of the research. Ordering, editing, designing methods, writing, making visualisations of actions and data, designing materials and objects, making use of original and existing visual materials, giving poster pitches, making use of prototyping, conceptualisation, realisation, communication design, spatial design – these are all design activities that connect *doing* design research with *storytelling* about design research, thus contributing to the value of your design research.

METHODOLOGY

The master programme applies its methodology in practice by addressing in a number of workshops and other teaching methods the components described in the circle below. The starting point is your self-defined *design question*. Design research is applied in order to implement this question according to a demonstrably

well-structured approach. The curriculum allows you to increase your understanding of design research and storytelling methods. You will choose and/or design relevant methods, and work on these methods through private study. In this way, you will communicate and work with experts and participants in order to gain the knowledge that is relevant for your question.

Other important aspects include documenting and reflecting upon each stage of this process, and publishing your outcomes. Methods of storytelling include *maintaining a research blog, mapping, writing, designing and editing*. The *visual essay* is the overall method that brings together found footage, self-designed (visual) materials, and writing. Outcomes are shown in the context of events, presentations and publications.

NEW PRACTICES

The focus of New Practices is on innovation within the contemporary design practice. This includes ongoing developments within the communications industry (networked media), innovations brought about by 'open and social design', and transformations of work processes, materials and technologies. These developments all play an increasingly important role in contemporary creative practices. In this learning line we will be examining the use of design in addressing social challenges, new technologies, ethical questions or participative work processes. These issues all represent a change of mentality in organisational matters.

During the first academic year, the curriculum will include a number of public lectures, addressing various paradigms that play an important role in design and in

design research. Some of these lectures will provide a broad perspective, while others will focus on a case study in order to provide a deeper understanding of one or more subjects. Besides these public lectures, each student will organise at least one public lecture or panel discussion, with the goal of providing new perspectives on evolving design practices.

New practices in general, and more specifically your own design research, generate new ideas for work processes, strategies and business models, and last but not least, for an articulated focus on your own professional role(s).

On a personal level, this learning line focuses on connecting your design research to your own evolving professional practice. How can you connect the insights gained from new practices and your own design research in order to further develop your own professional practice and the role(s) you wish to assume? This topic will also play a key role in half-yearly progress assessments as well as in the final assessment.

FREE CHOICE COMPONENT

The main point of interest within this component is self-guidance.

The *free choice component* includes three sub-components. For the first component, you will be writing a proposal describing which brief external study period, courses, or symposiums and conferences you wish to attend, and why these are relevant to your research.

For the second component, you will organise and moderate your own programme (lecture, discussion session, expert meeting) with experts related to your field of research. You will then reflect upon the knowledge you have gained through these

invited experts (VK2). Finally, you will produce a comprehensive report of the knowledge gained in all the courses, conferences, etc., you have attended, clearly indicating the outcomes and the relevance for your own design research.

GRADUATION

The final phase in the second academic year consists of three components: a presentation of the final product or project, a publication, and a final assessment. By presenting your design research in this way, you will demonstrate that you have acquired the final competencies of the Master Design programme, while applying in practice a design research attitude.

VISUALISATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

The *white centre of the circle* includes the *design question* which will become increasingly clearly formulated during the first semester. The final results of this question will be the final product/project as well as your publication and presentation of this product/project.

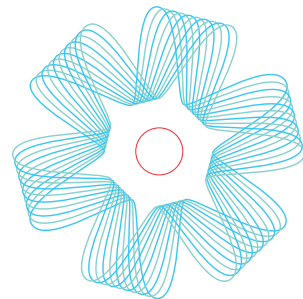
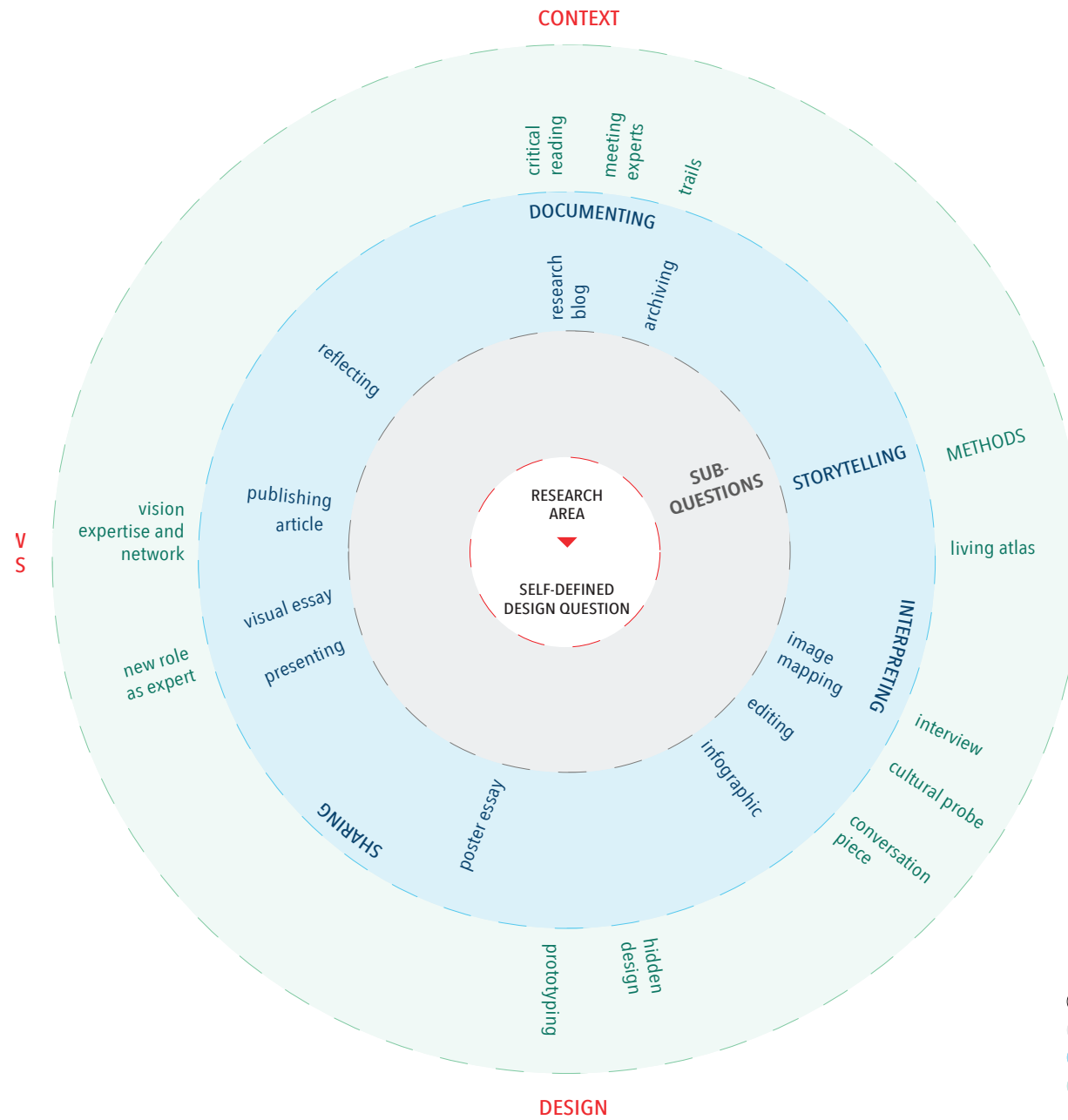
The *grey disc* is empty. During the course of your research, you will determine larger underlying themes (referred to as *trails*) and formulate *sub-questions* describing the relevant steps to be taken. These sub-questions will be formulated during the research and continually improved through iterations implemented by means of design research and storytelling methods.

The *light-blue disc* includes methods and actions for *storytelling design research*. By reflecting upon the acquired data and information – that are in and of themselves without meaning – you will gradually formulate the narrative of your design research. Storytelling strategies such as *presentation, publication* and *sharing* are indispensable in making design research accessible and valuable to the professional field.

The *outer green circle* represents methods of *doing design research*. Here you will acquire data and information by applying self-designed methods and by researching theories in order to answer your questions. The methods are as much as possible specifically related to the design, for example by applying visualisation at the right moment, or through self-design of research tools.

DESIGN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & CURRICULUM

The master programme makes use of a self-developed methodology in order to conduct design research and to present the project during a public event. The outcome is published in a designed publication. This methodology is represented in this circle. The three circles represent three interconnected work methods. These methods are usually present in every design research. The detailed elements are implemented in the form of workshops, lectures and coaching.



- RESEARCH AREA > DESIGN QUESTION
- SUB-QUESTIONS
- STORYTELLING (output)
- DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS (input)

MASTER DESIGN ADMISSION

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- Deadline for admissions: May 15, 2018.
- Admission interviews take place in May 2018.
- **Start: A three day kick off on September 5, 6 and 7, 2018.**
- A two-year, part-time programme.
- Study workload: 20 hours per week (30 ECs per year).
- Classes once every two weeks on Tuesday evening and on Wednesday.
- Statutory tuition fees € 1630 per year (for a first master programme).*
- Statutory tuition fees € 9800 per year (for a second master programme or non-EU).*
- Tutors' grant may be possible (DUO).

*Disclaimer: all fees subject to change.

MINIMUM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- This education programme is suitable for professionals with an active professional practice (at least three years' experience).
- At least an HBO-level (Higher Professional Education) diploma (BSc, BDes, BFA, BEng) from a design or related programme.
- The admission procedure is based on an admission document and an interview.
- A field of research from which a relevant research question can be developed. The relevance of the question must be clearly articulated.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The goal of the admission procedure is to select and prepare students for the Master Design programme.

Students of this education programme develop the competencies required within an advanced design practice and design research practice (see p. 15). This takes place partly in contact with tutors and fellow students, and partly in private study.

The admission interview functions as a null assessment, which requires you to compile a **starting document**. This document is crucial in order to gauge the level of your knowledge and skills with respect to the competencies for the Master Design programme and based on a reflection of your starting level as a professional designer.

This requires a reflection upon the past – what have I achieved, what are my abilities, which competencies have I already acquired – as well as the future. These are your own learning, development and research questions for the Master programme as well as for your own professional practice.

How to prepare for the admission procedure?

Begin by informing yourself about the master programme. Find out whether you meet the required qualifications, and ask yourself whether you are interested in conducting in-depth design research.

You must submit the starting document on time, so that the assessors can prepare for your admission interview. In this interview you will present your starting document and

discuss with the assessors your competency level, your motivation and the research you intend to conduct.

Based on your starting document and on the interview, the assessors will determine whether you have demonstrably acquired the starting-level qualifications as defined for this education programme. These starting-level qualifications are in line with the final qualifications for art, design and other related education programmes at an HBO (Higher Professional Education) level. The admission assessment is considered satisfactory when all 7 competencies are demonstrated sufficiently. The complete starting document must be submitted through *portal plus* no later than April 25, 2018.

Candidates without a background in design (either through prior education or professional practice) may, in exceptional cases, apply to the programme. These applicants must present a visual / designed portfolio that demonstrates sufficient aptitude in the field of design: the ability to give shape, to organise visually, to systematise and to design different aspects of information and ideas in a variety of real, virtual and digital spaces.

When does the interview take place?

The assessment takes place in May 2018. This is an oral assessment, conducted by two assessors.

MAKING A STARTING DOCUMENT

The document must be presented as a PDF. Please state your name, address and current occupation on the title page, and provide a table of contents including all of the components listed below.

Preferably 10, maximum 20 A4-size pages.

This document includes:

01_Key works

You will choose between four and seven key works from your current professional practice. Describe these works according to five different aspects: *design question*, *context*, *participants* or *stakeholders* involved, the actual *design* component, and the *results (including images)*.
See additional information; half a page (A4-size) for each key work, plus images.

02_Reflections upon the seven MD competencies.

Here you will reflect upon your competency level, focusing on each specific competency. Choose two key works for each competency. A separate reflection for each of the seven competencies. Each reflection is supported by two key works.

See additional information; max. 14 pages (A4-size).

03_Poster pitch on your field of research

A poster on the field of research in which you intend to conduct your design research, including any possible research questions you wish to address. Your field of research may still be under development.

See additional information; 1 poster (A2-size).

04_PDP: professional development plan

A PDP looks ahead toward your future. What are your learning objectives, which aspects do you wish to further develop? It is largely up to you to determine the direction of your study programme; this is important to keep in mind for constructive coaching consultations and evaluations. After reflecting upon the competencies, you will describe in this PDP what you wish to develop or focus on.

Note: A PDP describes your learning objectives, regardless of the research you will actually be conducting. Possibly you will have more learning objectives for some competencies than for others, or even in some cases none at all. You will formulate a PDP once every half year based on the development of your research. *See additional information; (max. 1 A4-size page).*

05_Your CV

A summary of your prior education and work experience, as well as a brief description of your current work or other activities and/or areas of interest in your professional practice.

(max. 1 A4-size page).

How to reflect upon competencies based on key works

You must write seven reflections upon the seven competencies. These reflections are important in order to provide us with an understanding of your starting position. The reflections play a crucial role in this part of the admission procedure, and are a way of demonstrating your competency level in concrete terms, by examining key works which you have completed in your professional practice.

You will reflect upon your level of competency, and how each given competency has played a role in realising the different key works.

Each reflection upon a competency brings together different experiences and is exemplified by two key works. Describe *what you did*, *your role in doing this*, and *how you did it*. Give examples, write in the first person, and avoid abstractions and general visions. The topic of vision will be addressed in the poster pitch.

The reflections are extensive descriptions.

- A key work is a product from your professional practice.
- A key work can be a project, a design, a presentation, a lecture, a publication, etc.
- Elaborate upon **four to seven key works**, in numbered appendices (K1, K2, etc.).

- Each key work is described according to **five aspects**: the design question (or assignment/commission), the broader context, the participants/stakeholders involved, the actual design, and the result.
- Each key work includes at least three images.
- Key works demonstrate your level of competency as well as your ambitions, capacities, potentials and limitations.
- One of the key works must demonstrate your affinity with design research.
- The function of the key works is to *support* your reflections and provide evidence; not the other way around. The reflections are the main focus of this part of the starting document.
- Each key work can be used to demonstrate more than one competency.

> For example:

A reflection on Competency 1 is supported by K1 and K3

A reflection on Competency 2 is supported by K2 and K5

A reflection on Competency 3 is supported by K3 and K6

A reflection on Competency 4 is supported by K1 and K6

Etc.

The five aspects

We ask you to use these aspects in describing the chosen works or assignments. These aspects are directly related to the different perspectives through which you will later be conducting your design research.

Design question

Describe here the question of the (self-formulated) assignment or work commission.

Context

Describe here the context of the design question. In which field or domain does this design question take place? Is it part of a broader discourse, knowledge domain or relevant practice?

Participants / stakeholders

Which participants were involved? Was there a process of co-creation? If so, be specific about your own role in this process. Did the client play an active role? Did the client group, users, readers or audience play a role in formulating the design brief?

Design

What exactly was designed, and which types of design were applied? Describe not only the designed object, but also the communication supporting the process with the participants involved.

Results

Describe here the result, and how the design functioned for its users after it was implemented.

Provide brief descriptions according to the five aspects listed above.

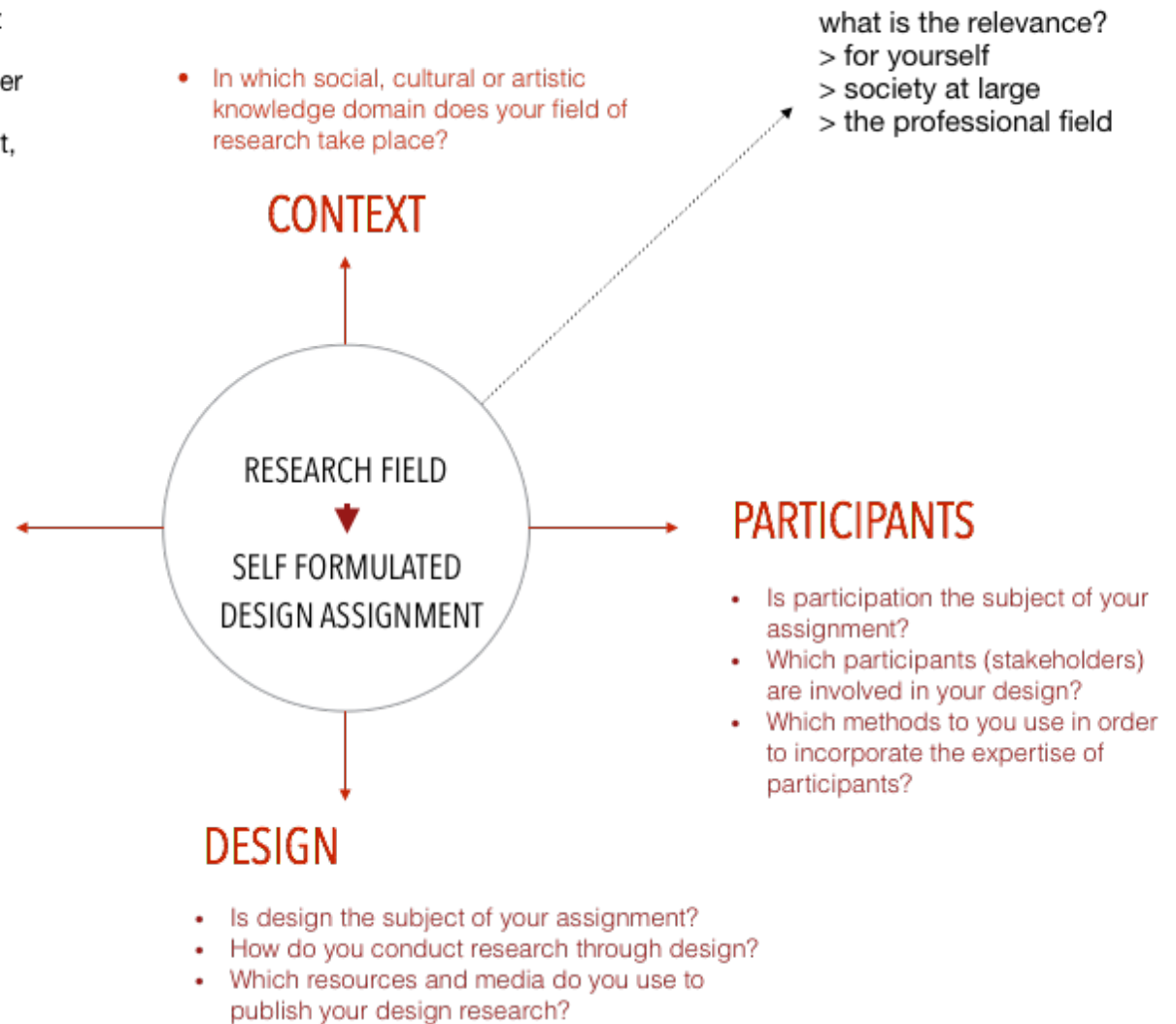
Help in preparing the **poster pitch (03)**.

During the course of the study programme, you will be conducting research from **these four different perspectives**.

The main focus for the poster is your field of research. Identify and describe the aspects that are relevant to your research, and the possible research questions you wish to address. Whether you choose to base your poster pitch on this model, or instead to formulate your own context, try to always address the relevance of your research.

NEW PRACTICES

- Is the evolving professional practice the subject of your assignment?
- How can your design research help you to position or reposition your practice?
- For whom is your design research valuable?



MASTER DESIGN COMPETENCIES

COMPETENCY-ORIENTED EDUCATION

The Master Design programme has formulated competencies in order to guarantee the structure, direction and substance of all learning activities. Competency-oriented education is characterised by an integrated approach toward the development of knowledge, skills and attitude. A competency is defined as the ability to function at a desired level within the professional practice. The master programme is oriented towards the future professional practice of students, which in turn is largely focused on self-guidance. This self-guidance means that competency-oriented education is also by definition student-oriented, with an emphasis on the integration of knowledge, skills and attitude (knowing how to, being able to, and wanting to). This emphasis on the (further) professional (talent) development of students leads to flexible education programmes with many possibilities for individual needs.

The professional practice is never far away: tutors are active within the creative field, while advisors and guest tutors are active within the professional practice.

A requirement for the development of competencies is that students must be allowed time and space to actively give direction to their own development, bringing their existing competencies to a higher level while also developing new competencies.

Assessments are focused on facilitating and supplementing this development of competencies. This means that assessments take place not only at the end of a project or period, but also provide ongoing direction in the further development of competencies, and in defining more clearly the student's professional role(s) through reflection upon their stronger or preferred competencies.

MD COMPETENCIES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p>MD 1. Creative ability</p> <p>The designer is able, based on design research, to realise authentic and meaningful designs that have value within a social context and for (the designer's own) professional practice.</p> <p>1</p>	<p><u>Performance indicators</u> Creative ability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 The designer applies and relates a (self-formulated) complex design question within a research through design. 1.2 The designer develops scenarios and materials for the benefit of his/her own research methods. 1.3 The designer makes use of the specific possibilities of media, techniques and materials in the design of various research iterations. 1.4 The designer makes use of design in the context of storytelling in order to communicate their design research. 1.5 The designer applies and relates in design the results of their own design research.
<p>MD 2. Researching ability</p> <p>The designer conducts design research by applying and expressing their own field of research in a design question, and by conducting research through design based on this question.</p> <p>2</p>	<p><u>Performance indicators</u> Researching ability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 The designer develops new professional knowledge, insights and skills based on design-related, empirical and theoretical research iterations. 2.2 The designer formulates research questions related to knowledge domains, participants, design, and new practices, and answers these questions using a variety of (self-designed) methods. 2.3 The designer strategically conducts design research of their own design question.

MD 3. Innovative ability

The designer is able to continuously develop, deepen and innovate their own work and work process, thus contributing to developments within their own professional field and within the relevant social context.

3

2.4 The designer documents and interprets the results of the various research iterations in an ongoing process.

2.5 The designer makes justifiable choices during the course of their design research.

Performance indicators Innovative ability

3.1 The designer makes use of new knowledge, insights and skills.

3.2 The designer is able to develop and design transformative processes, either independently or within a collaborative effort.

3.3 The designer finds a new role as an expert through their design research.

3.4 The designer contributes to recent insights within their own field of research.

MD 4. Organisational ability

The designer organises and realises their own design research and design.

4

Performance indicators Organisational ability

4.1 The designer organises formal or informal collaborative efforts for working on their design research and design.

4.2 The designer designs a work process with respect for the qualities and needs of all participants.

4.3 The designer establishes and maintains a relevant new professional network.

4.4 The designer designs a suitable business model for their new role as an expert.

MD 5. **Communicative ability**

The designer shares their design research, choices and design with participants, experts and colleagues in a convincing and engaging storytelling format.

5

MD 6. **Context awareness**

The designer positions their design research and their work and work process in a broader context and from the perspective of a specific vision.

6

MD 7. **Collaborative ability**

The designer creates conditions for collaborative efforts with a variety of participants.

Performance indicators **Communicative ability**

- 5.1 The designer reflects (independently and with others, in the research blog and in conversations, presentations and articles) upon the design research and the design.
- 5.2 The designer presents and publishes in a clearly argued fashion on the subject of their design research.
- 5.3 The designer communicates their own position as an expert.

Performance indicators **Context awareness**

- 6.1 The designer relates to new practices and social developments.
- 6.2 The designer shows an ethical attitude within their design research.
- 6.3 The designer is able to discuss their own vision.

Performance indicators **Collaborative ability**

- 7.1 The designer effectively applies their own qualities within the collaborative effort.
- 7.2 The designer shows empathy toward the position of the various participants.
- 7.3 The designer is able to consult with relevant participants on the subject of

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their own process.

7.4 The designer assumes responsibility for coordination and communication between the various participants.

7.5 The designer assumes responsibility for the results of the collaborative effort.

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CONTACT

For more information, go to: <http://www.wdka.nl/master-design/>

To make an appointment (through Skype or in person), please contact the Course Director, Harma Staal (<mailto:h.staal@hr.nl>)

