Your thoughts, goals, and dreams for 2026

POLYU DES'GN

POLYU DES'GN MDes

A Quick Guide to PolyU Master of Design

Innovative Business Design

Intelligent Systems Design

Smart Service Design

Transitional Environments Design

Apply: polyu.edu.hk/admission
Learn more: polyumdes.info
Enquiry: mdes.sd@polyu.edu.hk

PolyU Design, strategically located in Hong Kong, a vibrant city that serves as a gateway to Mainland China and Asia Pacific, offers a diverse range of taught Master's degree programmes. Our programmes cater to your professional, scholarly, and personal development needs, equipping you with the skills to navigate the rapidly changing environments and take charge of your future learning and development.

Our programmes aim to nurture innovation designers among the new generation who value innovation as much as its social and environmental impact. That is why each of our Master of Design (MDes) programmes is embedded in distinctive visions and principles, and they feed off one another through our curriculum. These programmes are led by our highly international faculty introducing a broad intellectual framework and analytical tools that awaken a new understanding in the world around you and inspire you to think beyond the silo. You will be connected to a strong network of academic and industry partners and work through projects that cover business and social challenges that are especially relevant to Asia.

This Quick Guide is a new format and curated content for our prospective students. It contains a concise overview of areas frequently researched when comparing study options, organises important information and useful links in one place, and guides you to come to the right programme and get ready for your application.

Discover the study programme that best aligns with your interests and career goals at PolyU Design. Read our Prospectus. Join our open day and information seminars to meet our faculty, and chat with our students about their lives at PolyU and Hong Kong, Asia's world city. We hope you can join us!

Read Our Prospectus

Sep 2026 Entry

Chat to Students

Request Information

Celebrating more than 60 Years of Design Education and Research in Hong Kong
PolyU School of Design

PolyU Design has been an important hub for design education and research in Hong Kong, offering quality undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in design to nurture creative talent across a wide range of industries. School of Design is a place where East meets West, allowing students to develop their design expertise while gaining an in-depth understanding of industry and society, with a unique international and cultural perspective.

School of Design is one of the 11 faculties at PolyU. The University is ranked among the world's top 100 institutions, with 6 subjects — Art & Design, Hospitality & Leisure Management, Nursing, Architecture & Built Environment, Civil & Structural Engineering, and Marketing — in global top 25.

The excellence of our design education is recognised on both the local and international stage. Internationally, the School was ranked 15th on the *Quacquarelli Symonds* (QS) World University Rankings by Subject – Art & Design in 2020 and is consistently ranked among the top 25 in the world. At home, the School is the only government-funded university among 22 degree-awarding higher education institutions in Hong Kong offering design education from undergraduate to doctoral levels taught in English, nurturing more than 1,100 students yearly.

Located in PolyU's main campus in Hung Hom, Kowloon, the School of Design provides a high-level, well-equipped environment for design education and innovation in the Jockey Club Innovation Tower (JCIT), a landmark building designed by Zaha Hadid (1950-2016). Home to PolyU Design, the JCIT contains a variety of first-class design studios overlooking the PolyU campus, labs and workshops, exhibition areas, multi-functional classrooms, lecture theatre, complemented with informal spaces to meet, interact, and exchange ideas.

IBD
INNOVATIVE BUSINESS DESIGN

An interdisciplinary, design-centred entrepreneurship programme equips students with the skills and competencies to lead transformational change in organisations and society. As the first of its kind globally, IBD emphasises the critical roles of of creativity, innovation, and responsible business practices in fostering sustainable growth. Students will complete three industry-partnered projects, gaining a deep understanding of the complexities of today's global market through the programme's unique integrative business design thinking approach.

Specialism Leader

Prof. Sylvia Xihui Liu
Assistant Dean (Academic Programmes) and Associate Professor, PhD (PolyU)

Deputy Specialism Leader

Prof. Kevin Denney
Professor of Practice (Social Innovation); Director, Li Ka Shing Design and Innovation Centre

Career Prospects

Graduates could benefit from the programme by equipping the necessary skills and competencies to think critically, challenge traditional business models, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.

Eligibility

A candidate shall hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in design, business, humanities, or a technological field from an institution recognised by PolyU, preferably along with two years of relevant professional experience, and shall satisfy PolyU English Language Requirement.

Read More

IBD Core Team

Programme Code and Subcode | 73035-IBD (Full-time)
73035-IBP (Part-time)

ISD
INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS DESIGN

An innovative specialism centered on interdisciplinarity, ISD integrates intelligent technologies, systems theories and innovative design approaches. By combining professional knowledge from STEAM fields (STEM + Art & Design), ISD drives transformative industrial innovation. The programme supports advanced and competitive industries through the application of cutting-edge technologies and processes, such as AI, Industry 4.0, robotics, and AIoT (AI + IoT), all facilitated by systemic design innovations.

Specialism Leader

Prof. Stephen Jia Wang
Director, Research Centre of Future (Caring) Mobility, Professor; PhD (Tokyo University of the Arts)

Deputy Specialism Leader

Prof. Hailiang Wang
Assistant Professor; PhD (HKU)

Career Prospects

Graduates could benefit from the programme by nurturing the creativity and design ability to embrace intelligent (especially AI-enabled) and systemic approaches and developing the awareness of current and emerging technologies in the innovation industry and the advanced manufacturing (e.g., Industry 4.0) environment.

Eligibility

A candidate shall hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in design, STEM, or a related discipline (e.g. communication, psychology or anthropology) from an institution recognised by PolyU and shall satisfy PolyU English Language Requirement.

Read More

ISD Core Team

Programme Code and Subcode | 73035-ISD (Full-time)
73035-ISP (Part-time)

SSD
SMART SERVICE DESIGN

An interdisciplinary specialism dedicated to creating impactful service interventions at the intersection of business, technology, and human ingenuity. SSD broadens the scope of design beyond traditional commercial practices, focusing on the socio-technical dimension with a critical, systemic, and human-centred perspective in service design. Students develop a comprehensive understanding of the technological, commercial, societal, and organisational contexts, providing a foundation for transforming design opportunities into innovative and sustainable service experiences.

Specialism Leader

Prof. Shera Hyunyim Park
Assistant Professor; PhD (RCA)

Career Prospects

Graduates could benefit from the programme by equipping the necessary professional skills to meet the demands of careers in the service industry.

Eligibility

A candidate shall hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in design, business, humanities or a technological field from an institution recognised by PolyU and shall satisfy PolyU English Language Requirement.

Read More

SSD Core Team

Programme Code and Subcode

73035-SSD (Full-time)
73035-SSP (Part-time)

TED
TRANSITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS DESIGN

A specialism that emerged in response to significant rural and urban changes in Hong Kong and Mainland China. TED complements other fields by introducing tools that synthesises ecological and holistic approaches, along with warm data, such as relationships and emotions. This broader perspective addresses the meta-crisis of our biosphere, enabling students to transform their understanding of complex systems into innovative design strategies and interventions. A transformative educational experience that inspires a shift in mindset and practice, TED empowers students to actively contribute to environmental regeneration.

Specialism Leader

Prof. Laurent Gutierrez
Professor; PhD (RMIT)

Deputy Specialism Leader

Prof. Daniel Elkin
Associate Professor

Career Prospects

Graduates could benefit from the programme by equipping critical approach to environmental and ecological design for designing systems-level change in our urban environments from being a consumption to a regenerative system.

Eligibility

A candidate shall hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in spatial design, architecture, landscape design, or urban and rural design or a related discipline (e.g. environmental studies, ecology, biology or urban studies) or an interdisciplinary field (e.g. ecological economics, environmental sociology, or environmental management and technology) from an institution recognised by PolyU and shall satisfy PolyU English Language Requirement.

Read More

TED Core Team

Programme Code and Subcode

73035-TED (Full-time)
73035-TEP (Part-time)

The Backstory
Master of Design (MDes) Scheme

The MDes was the first scheme-based, taught postgraduate programme at PolyU when it was founded in 2004, superseding the MA in Design launched in the 1990s. The innovative curriculum aims to foster a learning environment that empowers students in exploring transdisciplinarity, developing new approaches, and becoming an all-around creative talent.

In 2009, *BusinessWeek* rated Design Strategies (MDes) as one of the World's 30 Best Design Thinking Programmes. In 2025, the University Grants Committee (UGC) recognised the MDes as an eligible programme of the Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies (FTSS) in the priority area of creative industries conducive to the development of Hong Kong.

The MDes has been in operation for over 20 years. The programme's longevity creates unique connections and bonding among the MDes community: some of our alums become our faculty, visiting lecturers, industry partners, and collaborators who are involved with the MDes in one way or another.

In 2022, the MDes launched a refreshed, all-new curriculum under the new vision to nurture proactive leaders and game-changers for the future industry. This new direction has been informed by insights and analysis from rounds of research, reviews, and consultations with different groups of stakeholders for almost three years. The results are the four specialisms: Innovative Business Design (IBD), Intelligent Systems Design (ISD), Smart Service Design (SSD), and Transitional Environments Design (TED).

Scheme Leader
Prof. Stephen J. Wang

Characterised by high-level flexibility and variety, the MDes gives new impetus to interdisciplinary research and education in the region. Design thinking is by nature unorthodox; designers have a broader vision for the world, seeing it as systems to be organised and integrated. Areas of study (specialisms) become sources of knowledge and patterns to inform their work towards generating opportunities arising from global challenges. In the MDes, designers of innovation feel at home in the arts, humanities, science, engineering, and mathematics.

In 2024, the School's taught postgraduate community has around 250 students, including those from the Master of Design (MDes), Master of Science in Innovative Media Entertainment (MSc IME), and Doctoral of Design (DDes) programmes. The diversity of this community is further enhanced by opening some of the MDes electives to the DDes students, and the MBA and MSc students from targeted academic departments. The MDes continues to serve as a dynamic platform for cross-pollination.

Former Leadership
Previous Postgraduate Studies Coordinators:
Prof. Sharon Poggenpohl,
Prof. John Heskett,
Prof. Tim Jachna,
Prof. Mingxi Tang
Scheme Leaders:
Prof. Roger Ball,
Prof. Laurent Gutierrez

A Talent Hub and City Full of Opportunities
Hong Kong

Evaluating study options can turn out to be a career-oriented decision-making process. A study destination directly impacts one's career by providing networking opportunities, industry exposure, and cultural familiarity. Our alums' stories prove that matching the right interest to the right industry at the right time can set off a career with compounded benefits in the long term.

If you're looking to enhance your employability, one starting point could be for you to research a place or region, identify its specific industries that have strong job markets, and see if any of these industries offer the opportunities that interest you. If you're entrepreneurial and want to pursue projects meaningful to you, you want to seek out schemes for research and innovation funding and support and look out for the systemic support from the strategically important sectors or government policies.

For example, Hong Kong is the only Asian city with as many as five universities in the world's top 100 and is well-positioned to be a regional education hub. The Research Grants Council (RGC), identifies 4 designated themes of strategic importance and 20 grand challenge topics for the long-term development of Hong Kong through the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS) for an approved budget of HK$380M[1]. Another pointer on priory areas[2] is the Research Institutes and Centres that form the PolyU Academy for Interdisciplinary Research (PAIR). If you are on to the mission to propel social innovation, Hong Kong has funded over 610 projects, generated over 4,600 ideas and nurtured over 22,000 potential social entrepreneurs through a development fund[3].

Students who are compatible with our programmes generally demonstrate having:
- a career plan or direction
- related educational and work experience
- the ability to work in teams and perform deep work
- the willingness to learn from challenges
- work readiness soft skills

Hong Kong enjoys global and China advantages coming together in a single city. Its unmatched institutional strengths give to a vibrant startup ecosystem[4] of which 28%[5] of startups were founded by non-locals. Its welcoming immigration policies and a series of talent admission programme launched at the end of 2022 have welcomed more than 120,000 talented people from around the world to settle in Hong Kong.

Take advantage of the welcoming policy of the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates (IANG) scheme that allows you to stay for 24 months in Hong Kong after graduation and mark a new starting point for your career. Hong Kong provides everyone a chance to explore opportunities in a global city. The key is to know what you're looking for.

[1] UGC website: ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/trs/. [2] PolyU PAIR website: polyu.edu.hk/pair/pair-research-units/ [3] SIE Fund website: sie.gov.hk/. [4] Ranked #27 in the Top 40 Global Startup Ecosystems 2025, up from the Emerging Ecosystems ranking in 2024, according to The Global Startup Ecosystem Report. [5] Based on the startup survey by *InvestHK 2024*.

Application and Admission Information

Timeline

Appication Period
2025.07/02 –2026.04/30

Review Deadlines →
2025.10/15
Early Round
↓
2026.01/16
Main Round
↓
2025.04/30
Extended Round

Orientation Day →
2026.08/26
(Tentative)

2026/2027
Academic
Year Starts
2026.08/31

Application Procedures

BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.

Benjamin Franklin

Online Application (eAdmission)
polyu.edu.hk/admission

Additional Supporting Documents
Personal Statement, Two Letters of Recommendation Letters, Transcripts and Certificates, Design Portfolio/ Self-Introduction Presentation, Copy of English Test Results (Min. score: TOEFL iBT 80, IELTS 6.0)

Interview
Shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview to discuss the suitability of particular specialisms for their personal and career development.

Results Announcement
Applicants will be notified of the results starting from the ninth week after the application review deadline, to which their applications are submitted. By 30 Jun 2026, all applicants will be able to view their outcomes on eAdmission.

Student Visa Application
Applicants with a student visa, IANG visa, or dependant visa (issued at age 18 or above) are classified as "non-local students." All non-local students must obtain a student visa to study in Hong Kong.

After accepting an admission offer, non-local applicants are required to apply for a student visa through the Immigration Department of Hong Kong. Please note that processing can take 8 to 10 weeks, so it is advisable to complete and return the student visa application form with all the required documents to PolyU as soon as possible.

Programme Essentials at a Glance

	Sep 2026 (Fall) Entry
Year of Entry	2026/27
Application Period	2025.07/02 – 2026.04/30
Programmes Inviting Applications	73035-IBD/ IBP/ ISD/ ISP/ SSD/ SSP/ TED/ TEP
Mode of Study	Mixed mode
Funding Type	Self-financed
Class Schedule	Weekday daytime
Normal Duration	1 Year (Full-time)/ 3 Years (Part-time)
Programme Tuition Fee#	Tuition Fee# HK$7,400 per credit
Credits Required for Graduation	37
Graduation Requirements	• 6 credits in Compulsory Common subjects • 5 credits in Compulsory Specialism subjects • 15 credits in Electives (12 credits from Pool A and 3 credits from Pool B) • 1 credit in the Academic Integrity and Ethics (AIE) Requirement subject~ • National Education Online Module (non-credit bearing)
Mode of Application Processing	Applications are processed on a rolling basis. Since admission places for each programme are limited, applying during the Early Round is advantageous.
Initial Registration Credits	9 for local students 12 for non-local students
Financial Aid	**Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies (FTSS) for the 2026/27 academic year** The scholarship will subsidise the programme tuition fee for awardees, capped at HK$100,000 per student, after pay a minimum tuition fee of HK$47,000. Local students admitted to approved programmes in 2026/27 are eligible to apply, regardless of the programme's duration or mode of study. **About FTSS**

Remarks: Tuition fees are normally non-refundable and non-transferable. ~ Tuition fees will not be charged for the 1-credit AIE subject.