

Information for diploma sensors at the Institute of Design, AHO.

The diploma at the Institute of Design is the final project in the Master programme. The Institute takes a broad approach to the design profession that includes products, services, systems and interactive experiences. The education brings together aesthetics and technology, creativity and design methods, culture and research. The programme has its roots in Industrial Design, but today also includes Interaction Design, Service Design and Systems Oriented Design. This is reflected in the width of our students' diplomas, and the broad range of themes that they address.

The diploma concludes our five-year Master of Design and is done in the final semester. The diploma is a self-initiated and self-organised project that takes place over 18 weeks. The students develop and define their own project-descriptions (the diploma programme) in a 'pre-diploma' course, in the semester leading up to the diploma. During the diploma project the students have a main supervisor at the Institute, but can also seek additional input and guidance from across AHO and externally. Diplomas are typically done as individual projects, but can also be done in groups.

The diplomas at the Institute of Design are characterised by variety and breadth. The diploma projects are typically initiated and developed by the students, and they are free to explore different themes and formats. These can be creative explorations, product development and theoretical projects, or collaborations with commercial companies, public services or research projects.

Diplomas can also be discursive design projects that seek to raise questions or challenge societal or cultural issues. Often our diplomas are 'hybrids' that bring together different methods and actors, or span across our different design specialisations.

The purpose of the diploma is multi-layered. The students have to bring together what they have learned throughout their education to define and develop their own project. A challenge here is how the project is followed through, how it is developed and how it is executed as a design project. In the scope of the Master, the diploma is a relatively large project that demands that the student is self-driven, organised, structured and creative. At the same time, the diploma is a possibility for the student to explore his or her own identity as a designer, to research topics she or he finds interesting, or to challenge the students' acquired skills and methods. The diplomas should therefore be understood holistically as projects, where the students get to choose their own themes, approaches and processes, but where the challenge is also about organising and developing the project itself. Defining and developing the scope and plan for the project is done both in the project-description (diploma programme), as well as throughout the process.

It is important to note that in doing a holistic evaluation of the diplomas, the focus should be on the project itself rather than how closely it follows the initial description or diploma programme.

Deliveries and outcomes

The students deliver their diplomas in the form of their collected outputs, a presentation and a report. The outputs can be a variety of formats; models, prototypes, installations, diagrams, visualisations, mappings etc. The diploma report should give an overview of the project, the process, the possible outcomes (impacts) and the student's reflections. The report should not be evaluated on its own, but as giving an overview of the project. The students also deliver a 20-minute public presentation of their diploma on the day of the evaluation. The sensors shall evaluate the complete diploma project delivery consisting of the students' collected outputs, their report and public presentation.

Evaluation process

The evaluation of the diplomas is done by an external team of sensors. This sensor-team represents the different design-directions that the students can specialise towards. All the sensors are responsible for the overall evaluation of all diplomas, but each sensor is given particular responsibility for a selection of diplomas.

The sensor team is first given the diploma reports digitally. These reports should give an overview of the diplomas. The reports should be read by the sensors in preparation for the evaluation at AHO. The physical outcomes of the projects are presented to the sensors at AHO. On the day of the diploma-presentations each student is given 20 minutes to present their diplomas. The sensor-team then have a total of 15 minutes for questions, discussion and feedback. These 15 minutes should also include a brief summary of the sensors' evaluation and overall feedback. This is a public event for the whole of the school and the intentions for this presentation-format is to facilitate dynamic discussions about the diplomas and interesting responses, as well as a learning situation for other students

The sensor-team's final evaluation is given as a written report for each project. This is delivered sometime after the public presentation day.

Evaluation

In evaluating a diploma, the aim is to consider how the diploma has been developed as a project; including both its thematics, its processes, its outcomes and its reflections. The diplomas should be evaluated on the terms, problematics and scope that the students themselves have defined in their project. The overall diploma project is given the grades 'pass' or 'fail'.

The Institute of Design has described a set of overall criteria for evaluating diploma-projects. These criteria and questions are meant to for the starting point for the sensors' evaluation, but the sensors are free to go beyond these if a holistic evaluation of the diploma-project makes this relevant.

1. Relevance to context

- Is the project relevant to the contexts which it takes place in?
- Is the project relevant to - and does it contribute to – the design discipline as well as societal and cultural issues?
- Does the diploma candidate show reflection on the relationship between the context, the project and the wider world?

2. Design skills and professionalism

- Is the project's method and result professionally documented?
- Is the project thoroughly developed in relation to context, users, target groups, and the projects own goals?
- Does the project demonstrate a high level of design craft?
- Is the project's process and results well communicated and well crafted?

3. Risk and degree of complexity

- Is risk, novelty or innovation present in the project?
- Does the project show capability and will for experimentation and invention in process and/or results?
- Is the project ambitious or risky? At the Institute of Design, we value risk taking and ambitions over safe and conservative projects.

4. Balance and holistic evaluation

- Holistic evaluation of the diploma's overall qualities as a design-project: What are the strongest and weakest aspects?
- How is the project balanced in terms of risk, professionalism, experimentation, communication, etc? Here we want the sensors to reflect on how the candidate has developed their project within their own framings across the criteria above. For example: if a project shows high degree of risk taking or complexity, as well as communication and reflection, but doesn't land all the detailing, it should still be applauded. If a project shows low degree of risk-taking and complexity, or little reflection, we expect the other elements to be of a higher quality.

The Diploma Report

The diploma report must not exceed 8,000 words for individual projects (10,000 words for group projects). Scope beyond this must be discussed with, and approved by, the supervisor.

Assessment of group work and industrial collaboration

The examiners are asked to make a special assessment of the scope, depth and quality of diplomas that are the result of group work and industry collaboration. Groups must not exceed two students and the report must contain individual reflections from each student. If the diploma project is the result of collaboration with an external actor (e.g. industrial partner), the framework and scope of this collaboration must be described in the report.