

DES200 Design Futures

School: School of Business and Creative Industries

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast
UniSC Moreton Bay

**BLENDED
LEARNING**

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Online

ONLINE

You can do this course without coming onto campus, unless your program has specified a mandatory onsite requirement.

Please go to usc.edu.au for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

1. What is this course about?

1.1. Description

Designers must be able to think critically and apply or develop problem solving strategies to address the diversity of real world challenges. However, in an ever changing physical and technological environment, it is increasingly difficult to predict just what those encounters might be. This course is intended to engage you with many current themes and processes informing contemporary design practice and to open up discussions about our rapidly changing world. You will collaborate to develop design solutions that respond to social, cultural and ecological challenges.

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

| ACTIVITY | HOURS | BEGINNING WEEK | FREQUENCY |
|---|-------|----------------|-----------|
| BLENDED LEARNING | | | |
| Learning materials – Interactive online learning activities. | 1hr | Week 1 | 12 times |
| Tutorial/Workshop 1 – Scheduled face to face workshops. | 2hrs | Week 1 | 10 times |
| Fieldwork – Scheduled fieldwork | 2hrs | Week 5 | 2 times |
| ONLINE | | | |
| Learning materials – Interactive online learning activities. | 1hr | Week 1 | 12 times |
| Tutorial/Workshop 1 – Scheduled online workshops (Recorded). | 2hrs | Week 1 | 10 times |
| Fieldwork – Scheduled virtual field trips (Recorded). | 2hrs | Week 5 | 2 times |

1.3. Course Topics

First Nations perspectives
Sustainability and changing climates
Biomimicry
Planetary perspectives
Big data and artificial intelligence (Creative AI)
Urban design
Food futures and agtech
Inclusive design
Regenerative Design
Life-centered design
Speculative design
Digital fabrication
Virtual and augmented worlds
Preparing for an unpredictable future

2. What level is this course?

200 Level (Developing)

Building on and expanding the scope of introductory knowledge and skills, developing breadth or depth and applying knowledge and skills in a new context. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally, undertaken in the second or third full-time year of an undergraduate programs.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

| COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES | GRADUATE QUALITIES |
|---|--|
| On successful completion of this course, you should be able to... | Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming... |
| 1 Critically evaluate and use problem-solving strategies to address complex real-world problems. | Creative and critical thinker |
| 2 Apply design thinking to respond to identified social and practical challenges. | Empowered |
| 3 Collaborate to develop design solutions that meet the needs of a target audience. | Empowered |
| 4 Communicate about design and future trends and your decision-making processes through visual and written modes. | Engaged |
| 5 Interpret design theory and social trends to make predictions about design futures. | Knowledgeable |
| 6 Interpret and reflect on design ethics and inclusive design practices to produce socially engaged, agile, relevant and impactful design outcomes | Empowered Ethical |
| 7 Develop culturally sensitive design skills that respond to place, embrace sustainability, and acknowledge Indigenous protocols and perspectives. | Ethical Sustainability-focussed |
| 8 Apply design methods and creative thinking that respond to the SDGs including SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 4 (Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) | Ethical Sustainability-focussed |

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [UniSC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

5.1. Pre-requisites

Not applicable

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

Formative feedback will be provided via group discussion and weekly critiques of practical exercises and assessment work-in-progress during the tutorials.

6.3. Assessment tasks

| DELIVERY MODE | TASK NO. | ASSESSMENT PRODUCT | INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP | WEIGHTING % | WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH? | WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT? | WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT? |
|---------------|----------|--|---------------------|-------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| All | 1 | Oral | Group | 40% | Group oral presentation with slides (10 minutes) and supporting research documentation. | Week 6 | In Class |
| All | 2 | Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece | Individual | 20% | One research poster (A2 or digital equivalent) and accompanying process documentation. | Week 11 | Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check |
| All | 3 | Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece | Individual | 40% | Creative artefact (format negotiated), 250-word critical reflection and process documentation. | Exam Period | Online Submission |

All - Assessment Task 1: Wicked Problems Design Challenge

| | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| GOAL: | Collaboratively investigate a contemporary “wicked problem” and develop a design-led response that demonstrates your ability to analyse complex systems, identify key drivers of change and propose informed, future-focused interventions. This task encourages critical thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration and futures-oriented design approaches. | |
| PRODUCT: | Oral | |
| FORMAT: | <p>You will work in a team to select a wicked problem (a complex social, cultural, environmental or technological issue with no single solution) and develop a design-led response informed by systems thinking and futures perspectives. Your team will deliver a 10-minute oral presentation, supported by visual media that explain your chosen challenge, key research insights, future implications and your proposed design solution.</p> <p>Your submission must also include your research documentation and creative development. This may include research notes, sketches, diagrams, scenario outlines or other process materials that demonstrate how your ideas evolved and the contributions from your team members.</p> <p>Your presentation and documentation should clearly articulate the complexity of the wicked problem, the future scenarios you considered and how your proposed design solutions responds to emerging needs or opportunities. Your oral presentation will occur during the workshops and will be followed by a Q&A. The slides and documentation (PDF) must be uploaded to Canvas.</p> <p>Full submission details and examples can be found in the Assessment 1 folder on Canvas.</p> | |
| CRITERIA: | No. | Learning Outcome assessed |
| | 1 Application of design thinking and emerging design methods to respond to identified social challenges and wicked problems. | 2 |
| | 2 Ability to critically evaluate and use problem-solving strategies to address complex real-world problems. | 1 |
| | 3 Demonstrated ability to collaborate and work effectively as a team | 3 |
| | 4 Application and reflection on design ethics and inclusive design practices to produce culturally sensitive and socially engaged design outcomes. | 6 7 |
| | 5 Communication and professional presentation in visual, written and oral modes. | 4 |
| | 6 Application of SDGs | 8 |
| GENERIC SKILLS: | Communication, Collaboration, Problem solving | |

All - Assessment Task 2: Design Futures Research Symposium

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| GOAL: | Create a research poster that critically reviews a design futures text, project or artwork, and present your insights as part of the Design Futures Research Symposium. The poster should communicate key ideas through a visually engaging and research-informed poster format, demonstrating your understanding of design futures thinking and its social, cultural and environmental implications. | |
| PRODUCT: | Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece | |
| FORMAT: | <p>You will design and create a research poster that critically reviews a selected book, project, artwork relevant to the field of design futures. Various options will be presented during the workshops and available on Canvas. Your poster should present a clear, well-structured narrative supported by concise text, visual design and relevant contextual research.</p> <p>Your final poster will be presented as part of the Design Futures Research Symposium, offering an opportunity to communicate your findings to peers and academic staff. Your submission must include the final poster and supporting process documentation, such as research notes, drafts, references and visual development materials that demonstrate your critical engagement and design process.</p> <p>Full submission requirements, detailed guidelines and exemplar posters can be found in the Assessment 2 folder on Canvas.</p> | |
| CRITERIA: | No. | Learning Outcome assessed |
| | 1 | Critical understanding of design futures concepts and problem-solving strategies 1 |
| | 2 | Quality and depth of research, and engagement with design futures literature 2 5 |
| | 3 | Visual communication and poster design 2 4 |
| | 4 | Clarity and coherence of the research poster and supporting documentation 1 3 4 |
| GENERIC SKILLS: | Communication, Organisation | |

All - Assessment Task 3: Speculative Futures Project

| | | |
|------------------------|--|--|
| GOAL: | Develop a speculative design project that explores an alternative future scenario through creative practice and research. Your project should use speculative, critical or imaginative design methods to communicate possible, plausible or provocative futures, supported by research documentation. | |
| PRODUCT: | Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece | |
| FORMAT: | <p>You will create a Speculative Futures Project that responds to a chosen future scenario or theme. Your creative artefact may take the form of an object, 3D printed model, illustration, 360 video, audio, visualisation, interactive prototype, digital artefact or other speculative design output appropriate to your concept. The project must be supported by research-informed documentation that clearly explains your design decisions and the future context you are exploring.</p> <p>Alongside the creative artefact, you will submit a 250-word critical reflection. Your submission should include your process documentation in a compiled PDF which should demonstrate your creative process through sketches, research notes, development images, field observations or any other relevant process materials. The format and presentation of your creative artefact can be negotiated with the Course Coordinator to ensure it aligns with your concept and intended audience.</p> <p>Full submission requirements, format guidelines and examples can be found in the Assessment 3 folder on Canvas.</p> | |
| CRITERIA: | No. | Learning Outcome assessed |
| | 1 | Ability to evaluate and apply problem-solving strategies to address a complex problem and propose an original alternative future 1 |
| | 2 | Application of design thinking and original creative ideas in developing a design solution for an audience 2 3 |
| | 3 | Demonstrated skills in interpreting and communicating alternative futures through creative practice and design 4 5 |
| | 4 | Application of inclusive design practices and socially engaged approaches in the development of design outcomes for audience engagement 6 7 |
| | 5 | Application of SDGs 8 |
| GENERIC SKILLS: | Problem solving, Applying technologies, Information literacy | |

7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site– Please log in as soon as possible.

8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

Not applicable

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Risk assessments have been performed for all field activities and low to moderate levels of health and safety risk exists. Moderate risks may include working in an Australian bush setting, working with people, working outside normal office hours for example. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

- (a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
- (b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:

- (a) One day: deduct 5%;
- (b) Two days: deduct 10%;
- (c) Three days: deduct 20%;
- (d) Four days: deduct 40%;
- (e) Five days: deduct 60%;
- (f) Six days: deduct 80%;
- (g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:

- Less than 15 minutes: No penalty
- From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty
- More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](tel:0754301168) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](tel:0754563864) or email safe@usc.edu.au.

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](tel:0754301226) or email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au.

10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or studentcentral@usc.edu.au.

10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 1226.

10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email AccessAbility@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 2890.

10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit <https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The [Student Charter](#) sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

10.10. General Enquiries

In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

Tel: +61 7 5430 2890

Email: studentcentral@usc.edu.au