

PROTOTYPE, TEST, LEARN AND ADAPT

Course summary

Prototype, Test, Learn and Adapt is an applied professional module for public designers who need to reduce uncertainty and risk as ideas develop.

Public designers identify what remains uncertain within an idea, create prototypes and use experiments to test assumptions. They gather feedback and experimental findings, then use what they learn to improve the idea and inform the next stage of work.

The module develops the professional judgement needed to choose suitable experiments, create prototypes at different levels of fidelity, test them with users and stakeholders, and manage design work according to the level of certainty.

Students apply the practice to a work-based challenge and produce an experiment and iteration plan supported by evidence of prototyping, testing, learning and adaptation.

Who this course is for

This module is designed for existing and aspiring public designers who need to test ideas, reduce uncertainty and improve possible responses before or during implementation. It is relevant to people designing public policies, services, interactions, communications, operational systems or spaces.

Students must complete Introduction to Public Design before taking this module. They should also have access to a suitable work-based challenge through which they can apply the practice independently.

What you will learn

By the end of this course, you will understand:

- why it is important to reduce uncertainty and risk;
- methods for project-managing design work according to the level of certainty, including when to use waterfall or agile approaches;
- methods for identifying which parts of design ideas are uncertain, including those based on assumptions or bias;
- different types of experiment that can be used to test assumptions and reduce uncertainty;
- methods for making different types of prototype at different levels of fidelity;
- methods for seeking and recording feedback from users during experiments;
- methods for using user feedback and experimental findings to iterate design ideas.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- project-manage design work using an approach appropriate to the level of certainty;
- identify which parts of design ideas are uncertain, including assumptions and bias;
- select and use experiments to reduce uncertainty;
- make different types of prototype at different levels of fidelity;
- test prototypes with users and stakeholders;
- collect user feedback and experimental findings that increase certainty;
- iterate design ideas in response to user feedback and experimental findings.

How the course works

This is an applied professional module combining classroom learning with independent workplace practice. Students learn through a structured sequence:

- teaching of the concepts, methods and frameworks that underpin the practice;

- public-sector case studies that show how the practice is used;
- short practical exercises using individual tools and methods;
- group application through a realistic scenario developed across the module;
- reflection on learning and planning for workplace application.

Following the classroom component, students complete a two-day independent work-based project in which they apply the skills to a real challenge. They then spend a further day preparing their portfolio entry, completing their project reflection and taking part in a design crit.

Assessment and accreditation

This module is formally assessed. Students submit a portfolio entry demonstrating how they have applied all the skills associated with the practice in a real work environment. The expected professional artefact is an experiment and iteration plan, supported by evidence of how the student identified uncertainty, created and tested prototypes, gathered findings and adapted the design response.

The portfolio must also demonstrate how the student selected an appropriate approach to managing the design work. Students complete a project reflection and present their work at a design crit. A teacher from the Government School of Design assesses the portfolio evidence against the Public Design Capability Framework. Students are assessed on their deployment of the required skills, rather than whether an experiment confirms the original idea or the project achieves a particular outcome.

Students who successfully complete the module receive professional certification jointly badged by the Government School of Design and the Chartered Society of Designers.

Each completed module contributes to the student's professional portfolio. Students who successfully complete all seven Universal Public Design Practice modules will be assessed for chartered status through the Chartered Society of Designers.

Course format

Item	Details
Programme	Design for Experts
Duration	2 classroom days, a 2-day independent work-based project, and 1 day for portfolio write-up, reflection and design crit
Delivery format	Classroom days are in person, with independent work-based learning, plus remote design crit
Location	London or the North (Manchester / Sheffield)
Schedule	Takes place over four consecutive weeks, excluding school holiday periods. Classroom day 1: 11:00–17:00. Classroom day 2: 09:00–15:00.
Price	£650 per person

Booking

Courses are listed on Civil Service Learning and Government Campus, but bookings are made directly through the school's website at: www.schoolofdesign.gov.uk. To book a place, complete the booking form for this course. You will need a purchase order number from your organisation before submitting a booking. The school does not accept payment by credit or debit card. This course is VAT-exempt. The Government School of Design is hosted by the Department for Education, which acts as the supplier organisation and handles payments. Use **Department for Education** as the supplier name when raising a purchase order. You can download the supplier information from the Booking & Contact section of the school's website.

Further information

For questions about the course or the booking process, contact the school via its website.