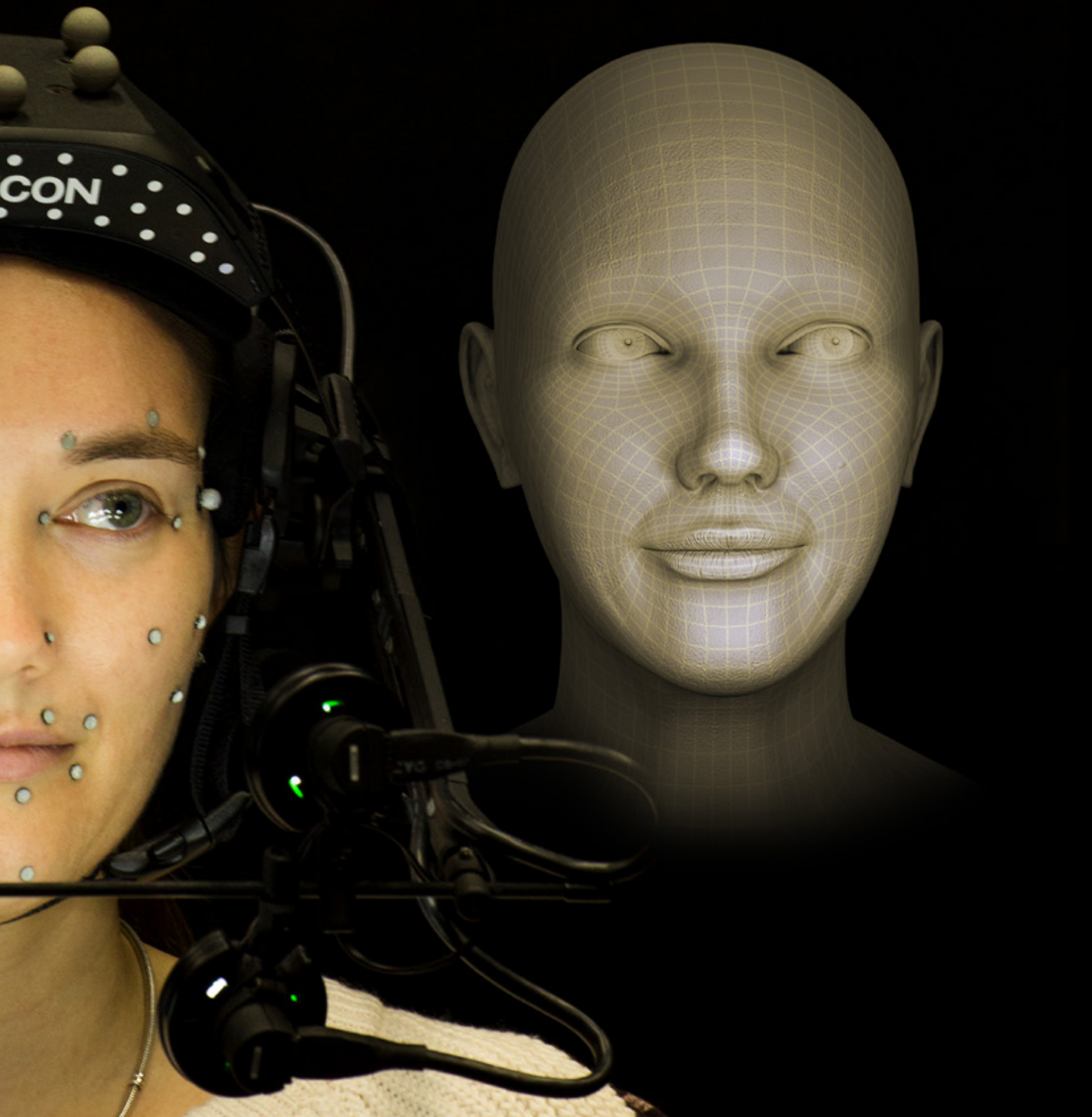


AUT

A FUTURE IN
DIGITAL DESIGN





WHAT IS DIGITAL DESIGN

Digital design touches on every corner of our world – whether through the making of movies and games (think Avatar, Minecraft, Game of Thrones) or the use of virtual reality and augmented reality as engineering, health, education and design tools.

The use of immersive and interactive experiences such as augmented and virtual reality, 360° video, social media and mobile applications is also growing in demand across every sector – and digital designers are at the creative heart of this change.

Digital designers use digital production and software tools to visually communicate stories, design

compelling user experiences and visualise data in engaging ways. There is a strong focus on visual storytelling and design thinking, using digital tools used to tell stories, communicate ideas, present characters, visualise data, and design interactive and immersive experiences.

Digital design skills are in high demand in the areas of moving image and interactive and immersive fields, including animation, visual effects, game design, motion graphics, cinematic production, motion capture, and augmented/virtual reality. Weta Digital, for example, employ many AUT graduates who work on projects

such as The Planet of the Apes films and Game of Thrones TV series.

Digital designers commonly work on projects that require a broad range of skills, such as the ability to combine digital elements into cinematic production, or to create 3D animation and code interactive events within a game or virtual reality experience.

Are you visually creative and technologically savvy? Are you a problem solver? Are you technologically adventurous? Do you want to use your creative and technological skills to solve problems for creative or social enterprises? If so, a career in digital design may be the thing for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Invention, reinvention, innovation

The move is away from a 'jobs' paradigm to one of invention, reinvention and innovation and entrepreneurship. This requires new forms of collaboration and community activism (community being any group you might identify with as a vehicle for changing the world, creating beauty, telling stories etc). Influencers and disruptors are the new norm.

Source: Toybox

Gamification of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality expanding

User experiences in AR and VR are expanding beyond entertainment into areas as diverse as medical and health education and training, future learning applications, data visualisation (science data, communication of science for education and health services delivery), architecture, tourism, heritage and museum and art gallery experiences.

This area of 'serious gaming' products require digital designers.

Digital advertising shifts – there is a big shift in advertising away from traditional formats, such as broadcast TV commercials, set duration online media, printed billboards etc. Instead there is strong interest in customised or tailored content that can be directly targeted to specific audiences as opposed to advertisers buying bulk media placements. There is also a rising demand for VR and AR content and installation advertising or real time advertising.

Source: Fluxmedia

Skilled professionals in demand

Digital design is a very young industry and employers struggle to find employees with high end skills and industry experience in NZ. Employers want to see boldness, a unique voice and evidence of collaboration with other artists, designers and technologists and story tellers.

Source: Staples VR, Virtual Reality

Animation environment competitive

Landing a placement or position in an animation company is difficult because there are not many animation companies in New Zealand. Generalists are more appealing than specialists unless you have a spectacular skill set as a graduate. Graduates need to stand out from their peers by producing work outside of the curriculum and producing faultless and creative reels and CVs. Once in the workplace, graduates need to quickly adapt to creative expectations, multi-tasking and delivery timelines and continue to keep training, up skilling and challenging themselves.

Source: Fluxmedia

WORK SETTINGS

Settings are as varied as the roles you can enter with Digital Design skills. You could work for:

Large companies with international reputations and big teams working on huge budget Hollywood productions (eg Weta Digital), working as visual effects artists, animators, motion capture artists or technical directors in specialist areas such as lighting and compositing.

Local animation companies, such as Flux Animation, on a range of local and international projects for commercial, TV and film ventures.

Advertising agencies that range in size and need skills in animation, visual effects, post production and design for motion graphics, TV commercials, web/online/social media content /apps

Gaming studios, including boutique studios that design games for industries that include education and social enterprise, as well as entertainment.

Freelancing – A common employment option drawing on specialist skill sets. Involves undertaking project driven contract work for any of the above organisations.

CAREER SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

You could find employment with a large company in a specialist role or join a smaller company or initiate a start-up that will require you to be more of a generalist or jack-of-all-trades. The roles below show the range of possibilities at entry level within each industry.

Animation and Visual Effects Industry

- Animator – working as a character animator on film and TV productions
- Motion Capture artist – working in Motion Capture production and post-production re-targeting live performance to digital characters and motion editing.
- Compositor – working in film and TV post-production compositing green screen material and digital elements

Advertising Industry

- Motion Graphics artist for advertising campaigns, TV commercials, title sequences
- Media production assistant for advertising campaigns for TV, online and social media. Could cover, editing, motion graphics, web design, VR and AR projects

Film industry

- Camera department – working on production sets and locations for films
- Editor – working as an editor in film post-production

Gaming industry

(mix of small entr start ups and larger game companies)

- Animator
- Game designer – gameplay design (senior position in a company/you in a start-up)

- Game concept artist – character and environment design
- Coder for game engines

Media Production companies

- Animation, visual effects and interactive design for a range of media products:
- Video display, projection mapping, live video projection, interactive video for live performances, fashion shows, trade shows, public screens, art galleries, arts festivals etc.

Virtual Reality companies (usually small start ups)

- VR game and interaction design, 3D animation, 360 degree video production and post production.

SALARY GUIDE EXAMPLES

Pay rates are impacted firstly by experience and then according to location, size of company and status of clients. The sky could be the limit after five or six years if you become highly skilled.

3D animator/digital artist	\$35,000 – \$100,000 pa, depending on level and experience
3D artist	Average \$57,000
Game developer	\$35,000–\$40,000 internship. After 6 months \$55,000.
VFX artist	\$30 – \$80 an hour depending on level and experience (jobs scarce in NZ)
VR director	\$1,500 per day (job-by-job basis)

Sources: payscale.com, Greendoor, CareersNZ, Toybox

The salaries above are indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (mid 2017) and should only be used as a guide.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Animation

- 3D animation software – Autodesk Maya, Autodesk Motion Builder
- 2D animation and editing software – Adobe Premiere, Adobe After Effects

Visual Effects

- Editing, Compositing, Cinematography for Visual Effects (shooting with Green screen)
- Visual Effects software – Adobe After Effects, Nuke, Houdini, Boujou
- Video Editing software – Adobe Premiere

Game Design and Virtual/Augmented Reality

- Game designer – design and coding
- Game Engine software for Gaming and Virtual Reality – Unity, Unreal Engine

- 3D animation software – Autodesk Maya, Autodesk Motion Builder
- Augmented Reality software – Vuforia

Motion Capture (used in all of the above disciplines)

- Motion capture artist – performance capture, MoCap data clean-up and retargetting, motion editing
- Motion Capture software – Motion Analysis Cortex, Autodesk Motion Builder, Autodesk Maya

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Good communicators
- Flexible and self-motivated learners
- Future-focused and innovative
- Technologically adventurous and savvy
- A problem-solver and proactive trouble shooter
- Excellent team skills
- Strong technical and artistic skills
- Excellent design thinking skills
- Excellent visual storytellers

AUT ADVANTAGE

Digital Design is a major in the Bachelor of Design, taught through AUT Design School – one of the top 50 global Art & Design Schools.

Digital Design students access the latest software and cutting edge technical facilities and infrastructure – Motion Capture studio, Greenscreen studio and Virtual Reality labs – developing innovative digital practices.

There is a strong focus on visual storytelling; using digital tools to effectively tell stories, communicate ideas, present characters, visualise data, design compelling interactive and immersive experiences. Practical experience – industry projects and work experience – often lead to job placement.

AUT is the only NZ university with high end motion capture (Mocap) facilities. Weta is the only other place to have facilities of similar level in New Zealand.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Ideally Digital Design students should do Masters to open up more job opportunities. The Master's level has a flexible structure so people can study part time while working. Research projects include Virtual Reality 3D Antarctica experience in collaboration with Antarctica Heritage Trust, Virtual Eye – 3D interactive diagnostic and patient experience tool in collaboration with Auckland University School of Optometry, Virtual Reality 3D interior space design tool for improving patient experience and workflow.



Reagan Qiu

PikPok producer

Bachelor of Design in Digital Design, 1st class Honours

I work as a producer for PikPok, a mobile game development studio with 80 staff. Our games have millions of players worldwide. It is a very competitive industry.

As a producer, I am responsible for ensuring the smooth development and running of our games. My job is to figure out deadlines, assign tasks and – most importantly – identify risks and problems before they arise.

I work with diversely talented people in art, design, community, tech, marketing and publishing roles. There are always new things to learn and unpredictable problems to solve, making it a fulfilling but challenging job.

First job in LA

After graduation I worked as technical artist at a start-up

game studio based in L.A., working on mobile Augmented Reality (AR) games. I got the job by researching companies working in the AR games field and reaching out with a CV and portfolio. Back then, AR was still relatively new so I guess I was a rare breed, and that definitely helped me. I stayed there just over a year, then did a year freelancing before joining PikPok.

I'm drawn to game development because it's faster paced than film and it allows me to nurture my broad range of interests in tech, art and management.

Doing a digital design degree exposed me to a lot of the potential roles in the industry and gave me a technical and artistic background. This has helped me a lot with managing and communicating between different departments.

EMPLOYER COMMENT

Reagan joined as an associate producer, then was promoted to producer within the first year. Important skills for this role include knowledge of software development, project management and game design.

Game development is highly multi-disciplinary and creative. Great skills, attitude and aptitude are key. You can develop people's skills but you can't necessarily train a great attitude.

Knowing how to work alongside a broad range of multi skilled people is really important, especially in the context of a team project. It's also important for individuals to demonstrate a

strong drive and desire to keep learning because the games industry continues to evolve at a frenetic pace, often using the latest cutting edge techniques and technology.

Most applicants have formal tertiary qualifications so you need more than good grades to stand out. Graduates need to talk about motivations, areas of interest and why they'd be a great fit for the role. You also need a clear understanding of the vision, mission, products and services of the company you want to work for.

**PikPok Operations Director
– Tyrone McAuley**

USEFUL WEBSITES

Weta Digital

www.wetafx.co.nz/jobs

NZ Game Developers Association

www.nzgda.com

Screen Production Directory

www.databook.co.nz

The Big Idea

www.thebigidea.nz/work

FURTHER INFORMATION


For the most up-to-date information on the study of digital design, visit our website:

www.aut.ac.nz/digital-design

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

