



Foto: KISD/TH Köln

**KISD**  
Köln International School  
of Design

Study program

## Integrated Design Research Master of Arts

**Technology**  
**Arts Sciences**  
**TH Köln**

**The Master's program »Integrated Design Research« offers you a specific range of design perspectives in four thematic clusters: Material Systems & Lab Culture, Social & Public Innovation, Urban Intensities & Resources, and Visual Cultures & Politics.**

Köln International School of Design (KISD) is an institute of TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences, one of the largest public universities of Applied Sciences in Europe. KISD offers its students a dynamic culture of inventive, experimental, and critical research. Project-based and student-centered learning in informal and flexible environments allows students to take participatory and integrative approaches in researching design. We aim to overcome traditional design boundaries and combine different approaches, perspectives, and practices, in order to deal with problems and questions that cannot be solved within the boundaries of a single design area of expertise. With our four thematic clusters, we create common spaces in which various areas of expertise work closely together on issues central to them all. We welcome applicants who are looking to engage with, explore, and pursue these cross-cutting clusters and perspectives. They are the gateway to in-depth research and aim to push, transform, and recalibrate the limits of design, theory, practice, and disciplinary methodologies. As a Master student, you will be able to immerse yourself in an integrated, transcultural, and transdisciplinary setting and work in research- and practice-based design processes. A key component of the program is the development of a Thesis within the scope of one of our four thematic clusters. Following your research interest, you will connect with different fields of expertise, broaden and deepen your competencies, and focus your research.

### Integrated Design Research

Our Master's program »Integrated Design Research« pursues a transdisciplinary research approach that combines design issues with scientific methods. In line with the course offerings in the Bachelor »Integrated Design«, research projects are carried out that contribute to the study of design, its preconditions, contexts and effects from different angles.

From the perspective of integrated design research, design is understood as an overarching process of material-based experimentation that can be methodologically open in all media of design. The concept of material presupposed here goes beyond notions of physical matter. It links digitality and materiality in a new way. Research is also understood as an open search- and questioning-movement, which in turn is characterized by different media and methods. Thinking practice and material-bound thinking are understood as equal, yet different, so that scientifically guided reflection, experimental design and artistic knowledge production appear simultaneously in the field of integrated design research.

### Study Course

Graduates of our Master's program »Integrated Design Research« take on a variety of roles within contemporary design across the globe. The study program intends to support students in their individual design research development, in defining a professional purpose and focus for themselves and in becoming responsible creative individuals. Our four semester program Master of Arts »Integrated Design Research« focuses on research and development through and by design. Ultimate objective is the conception and establishment of a research practice specific to design, which continuously alternates between the following of rules and their transcension as well as analysis and synthesis. It facilitates gaining, documenting and refining knowledge through the design of artifacts, systems, and processes. In this process, the student's own design is critically compared with other designs, mapped in relation to existing theories, and positioned in discourse in order to open a fertile dialogue between theory and creative practice, to achieve new insights, and to communicate them in a comprehensible way. Our program places special attention on the exploration and framing of problems and corresponding requirements for action. Ethical, functional and aesthetic aspects alike are considered in the development of concepts, processes, and products. To establish experimental ways of creating that which has not existed, concrete methods of design and research are identified, examined and developed in lab-like situations.

## Course of Study MA »Integrated Design Research«

	1	2	3	4
<b>Design Backbone</b>	<b>M01 Design Research</b> <i>Academic Seminars</i> 8 <i>Projects</i> 27 <b>35</b>		<b>M03 Proposals</b> <i>Proposal I</i> 6 <i>Proposal II</i> 6 <i>Colloquium</i> 2 <i>MIP</i> 6 <b>20</b>	
			<b>M05 Final Thesis</b> <i>Thesis</i> 20 <b>20</b>	
<b>Design Skills</b>	<b>M02 Research Approaches</b> <i>Methods Lab I</i> 6 <i>Methods Lab II</i> 6 <i>Kurse/AGs</i> 6 <b>18</b>		<b>M04 Research Surroundings</b> <i>Portfolio</i> 4 <i>Kurse</i> 4 <b>8</b>	
<b>Design Community</b>			<b>M06 Final Presentation</b> <i>Thesis Pres.</i> 2 <i>Colloquium</i> 2 <i>Publication</i> 2 <b>6</b>	
<b>Design Reflection</b>	<b>R01 Relate &amp; Reflect I</b> <i>Design Exploration</i> 1 <i>KISDtalks, Lectures, Presentations</i> 2 <i>Mentoring</i> 2 <i>Study Journal</i> 2 <b>7</b>		<b>R02 Relate &amp; Reflect II</b> <i>KISDtalks, Lectures, Presentations</i> 2 <i>Mentoring</i> 2 <i>Study Journal</i> 2 <b>6</b>	
	<i>Research</i>		<i>Elaboration</i>	

During the whole of their studies, our M.A. students are also involved in KISDprojects. Working in projects allows them to both deepen their understanding of design and research in their chosen thematic cluster in preparation for their Final Thesis and gain insights into other areas of design.

The Master's thesis, being the key component of the course of study, focuses on a research through design approach as described above within one of the four thematic clusters. The work of our students is research-oriented, theoretically and empirically well-founded, creative and experimental. They conceptualize and realize projects on their own and communicate design-specific scientific knowledge to the interested public comprehensibly. Our students are able to familiarize themselves with complex design- and research-relevant topics autonomously and formulate and pursue their own research questions in one of our four thematic clusters all by employing advanced and specifically developed methods and modalities of research, analysis, evaluation and interpretation as well as concept and draft.

### International Opportunities

Studying at KISD is integrative, interdisciplinary, and international. We offer our students the opportunity to apply for the Double Degree Program with our Partner Universities D&I College of Design at Tongji University in Shanghai/China and Chiba University in Chiba/Japan.

Master students need to apply after the first semester of their studies at KISD to be accepted as a Double Degree student with one of our partner schools. Double Degree students leave KISD during their studies for two full semesters to study abroad.

### Application Process

The Master »Integrated Design Research« welcomes applicants who want to examine how design can engage with questions of contemporary culture, politics, media, ecology, and urbanity. We invite them to research a specific topic, problem, or challenge from an integrated and interdisciplinary perspective, all by immersing themselves in an integrated, research-, and practice-based design process within our four thematic clusters. This brings together experienced, open-minded, and critical students from all over the world willing to contribute to a dynamic setting of learning, analysis, critical reflection, and inquiry, conducting experiments and interdisciplinary research in order to develop their specific design contributions.

The application portal of TH Köln is open every year at the end of April. Detailed information on the application process can be found at:

<https://kisd.de/en/application/apply/ma-integrated-design/> [↗](#)  
and  
[www.th-koeln.de/integrated\\_design\\_ma](http://www.th-koeln.de/integrated_design_ma) [↗](#)

### Contact

KISD Application Team  
E: [bewerber@kisd.de](mailto:bewerber@kisd.de)

### Address

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