

Access to Higher Education Unit

This unit forms part of an Access to HE Diploma. If delivering the graded version of this unit, please refer to the Provider Handbook for details on grading descriptors and the application of these across units within your programme.

Unit Title: Colour Theory

Graded Unit Reference Number: GA33ART

Ungraded Unit Reference Number: UA33ART

Module: Art and Design

Level: Three (3)

Credit Value: Three (3)

Minimum Guided Learning Hours: 30

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand the principles and features of colour theory	1.1 Use appropriate terminology to describe colour theory.
	1.2 Analyse the structure, organisation and purpose of the colour wheel.
	1.3 Evaluate the characteristics of additive and subtractive colour systems.
2. Understand colour harmony	2.1 Analyse the features of monochromatic colour schemes.
	2.2 Analyse the features of harmonious colour schemes.
	2.3 Analyse the features of complementary colour schemes.
	2.4 Compare the effectiveness of different colour schemes in design contexts.
3. Be able to apply the features of colour schemes.	3.1 Apply the features of two of the following colour schemes to plans and/ or projects: a) Monochromatic b) Harmonious c) Complementary

Indicative Content

Learners could cover the following:

(The information below is provided for guidance only and is not mandatory)

LO1	AC1.1 Appropriate terminology in colour theory: Hue, tone, tint, shade; saturation (intensity), value (lightness/darkness); warm and cool colours; primary, secondary and tertiary colours; colour harmony, contrast and balance. Use in plans and projects: describing colour choices in design work such as interiors, fashion, graphics or product design; communicating ideas using correct technical vocabulary; annotating sketches, mood boards and design proposals. AC1.2 Colour wheel: Structure and organisation (primary, secondary, tertiary colours); relationships between colours; positioning of complementary and harmonious colours. Purpose: supporting colour selection; visualising colour relationships; aiding development of colour schemes; informing design decisions to create balance, harmony or contrast. AC1.3 Additive colour systems: RGB (red, green, blue); used in digital media (screens, lighting); colours created by adding light; combining all produces white. Subtractive colour systems: CMY/CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black); used in print, textiles, and physical materials; colours created by absorbing light; combining all produces black or dark tones. Application: selecting appropriate colour systems depending on medium (digital vs print/design production).
LO2	AC2.1 Monochromatic colour schemes: Use of a single hue with variations in tint, tone and shade; creating unity and simplicity; subtle contrast through value changes. Uses: minimalist design, branding, interiors where cohesion is required. AC2.2 Harmonious colour schemes: Colours positioned next to each other on the colour wheel; natural and visually pleasing combinations; often found in nature. Features: smooth transitions between colours; limited contrast; calming visual effect. Uses: interiors, fashion, branding requiring cohesion and balance. AC2.3 Complementary colour schemes: Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel; high contrast and visual impact. Features: strong differentiation between elements; ability to create focal points; risk of visual tension if overused.

	Uses: advertising, graphic design, highlighting key features. AC2.4 Comparing effectiveness of colour schemes: Suitability for different design contexts (e.g. interior design, branding, product design); impact on visual communication; ability to create mood, emphasis or clarity. Considerations: audience, purpose, readability, accessibility, balance between harmony and contrast; effectiveness in conveying intended design outcomes.
LO3	AC3.1 Applying colour schemes in plans and/or projects: Development of design work using at least two colour schemes (monochromatic, harmonious, complementary). Processes: • Research and idea generation (mood boards, colour palettes) • Experimentation with colour combinations • Application in design contexts (e.g. interior layouts, fashion concepts, graphic designs) • Annotation and justification of choices Practical skills: Use of traditional materials (paint, pencils, textiles) and/or digital tools (design software); testing colour interactions; refining choices based on visual outcomes. Design considerations: Purpose of the project; target audience; visual impact; balance, contrast and harmony; suitability to context (e.g. environment, brand identity).