



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service



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# Master's degree

Technology  
Arts Sciences  
TH Köln

## Integrated Design Research (Master of Arts)

Technische Hochschule Köln (University of Applied Sciences) • Köln



## Overview

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Degree  | Master of Arts in Integrated Design  |
| Teaching language   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>English</li></ul>  |
| Languages   | Courses are held in English (100%).  |
| Full-time / part-time   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>full-time</li></ul>  |
| Programme duration  | 4 semesters  |
| Beginning   | Winter semester  |
| Additional information on beginning, duration and mode of study | <p>The new group of Master of Arts (MA) students starts in mid-September in Cologne with two introductory weeks. During this time, students will get to know the campus (including all labs), have workshops with professors from their chosen cluster and get to know fellow students.</p> <p>The majority of courses are conducted in person, with only a few exceptions where online classes are still offered.</p>   |
| Application deadline  | <p>The application period is open from February to the end of April each year. Incoming students begin their studies in the middle of September in the year that they are accepted.</p> <p>Please check the "How to Apply" section of the individual TH Köln programme websites for current application deadlines.</p> <p><a href="http://www.th-koeln.de/programs">http://www.th-koeln.de/programs</a></p> <p><a href="https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/application-process/">https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/application-process/</a></p> |
| Tuition fees per semester in EUR                                | None   |
| Combined Master's degree / PhD programme                        | No   |
| Joint degree / double degree                                    | Yes  |

**Description/content**

The MA programme in Integrated Design Research focuses on research and development through and by design. The ultimate objective is the conception and establishment of a research practice specific to design, which continuously alternates between the following of rules and their transcendence, in addition to analysis and synthesis. It facilitates gaining, documenting and refining knowledge through the design of artefacts, systems and processes. The practical design process by itself is not enough to be considered research in this sense. Rather, the design has to be critically compared to other approaches, its relation to existing theories mapped and its position in discourse determined. Design is scientific research only if it promotes a fertile dialogue between theory and creative practice, generates new knowledge and communicates it comprehensibly. The Master's thesis, being the key component of the course of study, focuses on a "research through design" approach of this kind within one of four thematic clusters: Material Systems & Lab Culture, Social & Public Innovation, Urban Intensities & Resources or Visual Cultures & Politics.

The course of study in Integrated Design places special attention on the exploration and framing of problems and corresponding requirements for action. Ethical, functional and aesthetic aspects are considered in the development of concepts, processes and products. To establish experimental ways of creating that have not existed, concrete methods of design and research are identified, examined and developed in lab-like situations.

The course of study is characterised by an integrated, intercultural and interdisciplinary environment as well as research- and practice-oriented design processes. Self-determined acquisition of knowledge takes the place of instruction as students concern themselves with questions of the social, cultural and aesthetic potency of design as well as its theorisation. Drafts and designs are discussed as practices generating knowledge and projecting the world with regard to their contextual, historical and social embeddedness, also taking into account possible interdependencies of these practices and their transcultural entanglements. Thereby productive as well as deconstructive perspectives on historical and current practices of design emerge.

Research through design is conducted not just for but also with society. Transdisciplinary projects provide students with the opportunity of developing and realising research and designs jointly with non-academic research institutions or non-academic partners in the cultural, civic, urban or economic realm. Furthermore, there is the possibility of integrating inter- or transcultural approaches by choosing to do a double degree with one of two current international partner schools, extending studies by one semester.

## Course Details

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**Course organisation****Module research:**

Students select projects and scientific seminars from the thematic clusters offered at KISD (Köln International School of Design – see additional remarks) in which they concern themselves with topics, methods and potentials of design-research. It is on the basis of specifically targeted research and critical evaluation that phenomena relevant to the studies of Integrated Design are investigated and scientifically examined. The focus is on the differing perspectives of the fields of research present at KISD on socially, culturally, politically and ecologically relevant questions. Of particular interest in this regard is the quality of both research and acquisition of systematic design processes, their theories, heuristics and models, and their description and reflection at an appropriate academic and design-specific level (e.g. as a presentation of drafts, a written and a visual elaboration).

**Module elaboration:**

Within the "Master's Self-Initiated Project" (MIP), students develop and realise a self-initiated project in a team with other students. The MIP as an experimental research and draft project may be seen as a preparation for the "Proposals". Furthermore, students may work with cooperation partners (research establishments, institutions, organisations, initiatives, companies, etc). Thematically, the MIP is to be completed in the Cluster in which the students will be writing their theses, as decided in their second semester, with the MIP ideally being supervised by the same lecturer who will also supervise the final thesis.

In the "Proposals", which will be the basis of the final thesis, students identify and investigate two topics within the framework of their chosen Thematic Cluster, independently develop critical

research questions and establish a connection to design practices on a methodological level. Regardless of whether the focus of the thesis is on the aspect of research, development or draft, a detailed written paper that meets the requirements of academic and scientific practice and systematics is expected. Of special interest is conveying the complexity, the relevance and the guiding research question or problem of the process in a comprehensible way. The results of the Proposals are to be presented and defended in a colloquium.

#### Final thesis

The Master's thesis is a draft project including a written elaboration (description, analysis and interpretation) or a theory paper based within the cultural studies and including a distinct design-oriented dimension. It is completed in the thematic cluster chosen by the students. The final thesis is the central work of KISD graduates. It showcases the integrative research and design skills that the students have acquired and expanded during their studies.

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|---|---|
| <b>International elements</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International guest lecturers</li> <li>• Integrated study abroad unit(s)</li> <li>• Language training provided</li> <li>• Training in intercultural skills</li> <li>• Study trips</li> <li>• Courses are led with foreign partners</li> <li>• Projects with partners in Germany and abroad</li> <li>• International comparisons and thematic reference to the international context</li> <li>• Content-related regional focus</li> </ul> |
| <b>Integrated study abroad unit(s)</b>                      | One (additional) semester possible  |
| <b>Course-specific, integrated German language courses</b>  | No  |
| <b>Course-specific, integrated English language courses</b> | No  |

## Costs / Funding

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Tuition fees per semester in EUR</b>   | None  |
| <b>Semester contribution</b>  | <p>Approx. 300 EUR per semester</p> <p>Included in the semester fee is the semester ticket for public transport for the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia.</p>  |
| <b>Costs of living</b>  | The cost of living for your stay largely depends on your personal needs. When planning your stay, you should calculate monthly costs of approx. 800 to 1,000 EUR.     |
| <b>Funding opportunities within the university</b>                                    | Yes   |
| <b>Description of the above-mentioned funding opportunities within the university</b> | International students are eligible to apply for the "Deutschlandstipendium". The scholarship holders receive approx. 300 EUR per month for the duration of one year. |

# Requirements / Registration

## Academic admission requirements

Academic degree (BA or higher) with a study duration of three-and-a-half years (180 ECTS), professional experience might be taken into account upon individual request.

We will request the following documents from you:

- Portfolio: If possible, update and adapt your existing portfolio for this assessment. Choose the projects and experiences that give a good overview both of your fields of interest and your design/design-related experiences and qualifications. Works can come from academic, professional or even free projects.
- Reference and letters of recommendation: please send us at least one letter of recommendation from either an academic or a professional institution/organisation. The person should also act as a personal referee – in case we require more information about you.
- Letter of motivation: state clearly why you want to study the graduate programme in Integrated Design, why in Germany and why at KISD. We would like to find out how much you know about us and how this meets the expectations you have formulated.
- Study programme expectations: Please let us know what exactly you expect from your graduate studies at KISD. This may take the form of a precise depiction of an integrated design project you have in mind – or a substantial argumentation of your general interest in the field of integrated design.

In any case, please try to be as clear and comprehensive as possible in presenting your expectations and interests. All materials should be designed by you with appropriate means. We give no specific "format" for the presentation of your application – so this is your opportunity to give us an idea of your skills, competencies in presenting your ideas, and specific interests regarding our programme.

If you are coming from abroad and do not have a German school or university degree, please note that the application procedure is divided into **two parts**. FIRST, you have to apply via uni-assist (<https://www.uni-assist.de>). Then you will take part in the KISD assessment procedure for the MA Integrated Design Research. Please check the online platform at <https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/application-process/> for further information.

## Language requirements

As the language of instruction is English, applicants should provide proof of English proficiency.

We recognise all B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and do not have a specific deadline for the amount of time that they need to be valid.

List of major recognised tests and their corresponding B2 scores (<https://www.efset.org/cefr/b2/>):

- CEFR: B2 level
- EF SET: B2 level – 51 to 60 points
- IELTS: B2 level – 5.5 to 6.0 points
- TOEFL: B2 level – 72 to 94 points (Internet-based version, uni-assist code: 2727)
- Cambridge: B2 level – 160 to 179 points
- Global Scale of English (Pearson): B2 level – 59 to 75 points

Please note that all MA students should write a substantial research-based final thesis in English to complete the programme.

## Application deadline

The application period is open from February to the end of April each year. Incoming students begin their studies in the middle of September in the year that they are accepted.

Please check the "How to Apply" section of the individual TH Köln programme websites for current application deadlines.

<http://www.th-koeln.de/programs>

<https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/application-process/>

**Submit application to**

If you are a prospective international student, the way to apply is determined by your citizenship, your desired programme and your previous academic qualifications.

Further information: <https://www.th-koeln.de/internationalapplicants> and <https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/application-process/>

## Services

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**Possibility of finding part-time employment**

Taking on a part-time job while studying has lots of benefits. Students can earn some extra money and gain valuable professional experience, and they might even take a first step up on the career ladder. Gaining a first insight into the German corporate world is especially beneficial for international students.

Many students partially fund their studies at TH Köln by taking on a part-time job in or outside the university.

**Accommodation**

Being Germany's fourth largest city, Cologne is a highly attractive place to live. The increasing influx of people can make the search for adequate accommodation quite difficult. Dozens of apartment hunters often compete for one single apartment. This is why we strongly recommend that you start looking for a place to live as soon as possible.

Cologne's most convenient and economical housing option is often a student dormitory. A public student services association called "Kölner Studierendenwerk" (KSTW) operates 88 student dorms offering roughly 4,800 rooms. The seemingly large number of dorm rooms is misleading; as the dormitories are open to the roughly 90,000 students enrolled at all Cologne universities, they are in extremely high demand. Please be aware that TH Köln does not allocate the rooms in these dorms. Please apply directly to the KSTW: <https://www.kstw.de/wohnen>. You do not yet need a letter of admission in order to apply.

The fierce competition on the private housing market has resulted in above-market rents – particularly in proximity of the city centre. We therefore encourage you to be flexible. Try to look for apartments outside the centre or share an apartment – and the cost of rent – with other students.

[www.th-koeln.de/accommodation](http://www.th-koeln.de/accommodation)

**Support for international students and doctoral candidates**

- Buddy programme
- Tutors
- Accompanying programme
- Cultural and linguistic preparation
- Visa matters

# – Technische Hochschule Köln (University of Applied Sciences)



Main building, Südstadt Campus, TH Köln

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Technische Hochschule Köln – abbreviated as TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences – sees itself as a university of technology, arts, and sciences. With its disciplinary and cultural diversity and openness, TH Köln's activities are aimed at cultural and technological breakthroughs of high societal relevance. Thus, TH Köln contributes substantially to resolving social challenges. As a community of faculty and students, we see ourselves as a learning organisation forging new paths. For instance, TH Köln is one of the pioneers in the field of development and formation of concepts for higher education didactics.

Our subject range includes the fields of applied natural sciences, architecture and construction, information and communication, computer science, engineering, culture and society, and social sciences as well as business studies. More than 100 degree programmes are offered as full-time programmes or, in some cases, as career-integrated or part-time programmes. As a place where research-based learning and academic education take place, the university nurtures prospective scholars through cooperative dissertations. Annually, about 6,500 students take up their studies at TH Köln. Overall, 27,000 students from about 120 different countries along with 440 professors and 2,000 staff members apply their potential.

Research mainly focuses on future-related issues, including climate change, energy supply, health, and food safety as well as demographic changes. While developing solution strategies for the most important questions of our time, researchers offer their professional expertise in interdisciplinary interaction. At the same time, they collaborate closely with local, national, and international cooperation partners, including 350 international institutions of higher education. The university offers its researchers an attractive sphere of activity. The quality seal "HR Excellence in Research" awarded by the European Commission certifies that TH Köln meets international standards in the field of human resources development.

TH Köln's campuses are located in Cologne, Gummersbach, and Leverkusen.

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

## University location

Its metropolitan vibe, diverse student scene and a cityscape abounding with cultural and historical treasures make Cologne one of Europe's prime university cities. Cologne's origins date back to the Roman Empire more than 2,000 years ago. Today, Cologne is Germany's fourth largest city with a population of just over one million and has evolved as an economic and cultural metropolis at the heart of Europe. The city's characteristic landmark and source of pride for every inhabitant is without a doubt the magnificent Cologne Cathedral, locally known as the "Kölner Dom". Towering over the quaint Old Town of Cologne at 156 metres, this masterpiece of Gothic architecture is the world's third-highest cathedral and attracts around six million visitors a year, making it Germany's most popular tourist attraction. Visitors from all over the world are bound to feel at home immediately, as Cologne is a true melting pot of cultures. Close to one-fifth of its inhabitants have an international background. Cologne's economy is characterised by its amalgamation of different industries and trades. Home to the country's most influential television and radio stations, Cologne is unquestionably Germany's media capital and host to some of the continent's biggest trade fairs. Quite a few of the world's most renowned enterprises call the metropolitan region their home, in particular, corporations operating in the automobile industry, biotechnology and life sciences, chemicals and pharmaceuticals as well as commerce and banking.

Please note that TH Köln also has two remote campuses outside Cologne, which are located in the towns of Gummersbach and Leverkusen.

Gummersbach is a town with 50,000 inhabitants located 55 km east of Cologne, surrounded by a hilly landscape which is a recreational area for residents from Cologne and other cities nearby. The campus can be reached in a few minutes from Gummersbach train station. A train ride to Cologne, which is the largest city in the region, takes one hour and ten minutes and will be covered by the semester ticket, which is included in the semester fee. Students will be able to find affordable accommodation in Gummersbach and focus on their studies in the great environment of a modern campus.

The Leverkusen campus is located 15 km north of Cologne in the Neue Bahnstadt Opladen and was opened in 2022. It is close to the CHEMPARK in Leverkusen, which is one of the largest chemical parks in Europe. Global players from the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, such as Bayer and LANXESS, are located there. With 160,000 inhabitants, Leverkusen is a smaller industrial city that has plenty of opportunities for relaxation, thanks to its location in the foothills of the Bergisches Land region. In Leverkusen, you can find urban buzz and village-like tranquillity in close proximity. The campus can also be reached with TH Köln's semester ticket.

## Contact

### Technische Hochschule Köln (University of Applied Sciences)

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50968 Köln

✉ [international-degree-seekings@th-koeln.de](mailto:international-degree-seekings@th-koeln.de)  
🌐 Course website: <https://kisd.de/en/application/ma-integrated-design/>

📘 <https://www.facebook.com/technischehochschulekoeln>

🐦 [https://twitter.com/th\\_koeln](https://twitter.com/th_koeln)

🌐 <https://de.linkedin.com/school/cologne-university-of-applied-sciences/>

📷 [https://www.instagram.com/th\\_koeln/](https://www.instagram.com/th_koeln/)

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