

MDS

STRATEGIC DESIGN since 1999

BUILDING NEW BUSINESSES
AND STRATEGIES THROUGH DESIGN

The Specializing Master in Strategic Design - Building new businesses and strategies through design, is a 1st Level Specializing Master by **Politecnico di Milano**, designed by POLI.design and managed in collaboration with MIP, the Politecnico di Milano School of Management.

XXIX EDITION - 13TH April 2026- 31ST July 2027

In collaboration with:

POLIMI GRADUATE SCHOOL OF **MANAGEMENT**

MEIM

MASTER IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
INNOVATION MANAGEMENT
IN COLLABORATION WITH **MIT SLOAN**

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INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC DESIGN

Strategic Design is a design activity that concerns the Product Service System, i.e. the integrated body of products, services and communication strategies that either an actor or a network of actors (companies, institutions, non profit organizations, etc.) generate and develop to create value. It is often claimed that technological innovation, cultural and economical globalization, and the transition to environmental sustainability generate problems and opportunities. It is also repeatedly stated that the possibility to avoid the former and to exploit the latter requires the development of three core skills: visioning, sensing innovation and creating solutions embedded in new business models. It calls for the ability to design products and services whose success today anticipates what will be, or may have to be, the norm of tomorrow.

A PROFESSIONAL CAREER AT THE FRONTIER BETWEEN DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

The Specializing Master in Strategic Design is aimed at young graduates that experience a first job who wish to start or redirect their professional careers at the frontier between design, management and innovation. It is specifically oriented to young designers who wish

to learn and appraise innovation management and business administration skills, and young professionals and managers interested in understanding the culture and work practices of how design determines business strategies.

Graduates from previous editions of the Specializing Master in Strategic Design have found employment in two main areas: as specialists in Marketing and Innovation (marketing directors, R&D managers, industrial designers, product/service and brand developers) and in Innovation Design Management (as design managers, design directors, project managers, product managers, retail managers, brand managers and Product Service System innovation consultants). Moreover different students launched their own design based new ventures.



OBJECTIVES

The educational objective of the Specializing Master is to build a specific competence and qualified professionalism in strategic design issues and in the innovation and design of the product system. Its particular purpose is to train professionals in the integration of product, service and communication components.

The Specializing Master programme seeks to:

- develop strategic planning skills in terms of problem-setting and problem-solving;
- develop personal entrepreneurship aptitude;
- develop complexity management skills;
- develop competencies to generate corporate visions;
- acquire management skills for strategic design projects;
- acquire the necessary tools to communicate strategic design projects.



BEING A STRATEGIC DESIGNER MEANS:

- AUGMENTING THE INNOVATION OPTIONS SPACE.
- PROVIDING GOOD QUESTIONS. GOOD ANSWERS FOLLOW
- REFRAMING THE WIDESPREAD SOLID BELIEFS.
- UNVEILING THE BLACK SIDE OF TECHNOLOGIES.
- VISUALIZING THE UNVISUALIZED KNOWLEDGE.
- SEARCHING FOR SOCIAL ASPECTS IN BUSINESS CONCEPTS.
- SEARCHING FOR BUSINESS ASPECTS IN SOCIAL CONCEPTS.
- DESIGNING PRODUCTS WITH A SERVICE PERSPECTIVE.
- DESIGNING SERVICES WITH A PRODUCT PERSPECTIVE.
- LEARNING FROM THE EDGE OF WEAK POSSIBILITIES.
- ASSUMING DESIGN DECISIONS ACKNOWLEDGING BUSINESS EFFECTS
- SEEING DESIGN FROM AN ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSPECTIVE.

A FINE MIX OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Training designers to transform ideas into reality



Research

20%



Design

30%



Prototyping

30%



Iteration

20%



DIDACTIC SPIRIT

The programme seeks to equip students with the skills and abilities that will allow them to identify and interpret company values and product offerings, orientating them according to new models of innovation and development. It also seeks to generate the managerial skills necessary for the development of Product Service Systems that will support these companies in developing sustainable competitive advantages that will make the difference in tomorrow's market. This key concepts, defined as the 4S of Strategic Design, are System, Society, Sustainability and Seduction:

System / The programme offers methods and tools that foster the ability to identify, decipher and reinterpret factors determining the structure of business models and their underlying value chains, in order to offer companies innovative, systemic solutions for product system innovation.

Society / The Specializing Master follows a user-centered, context-based approach to Product Service System innovation in order to improve the collective quality of life and interpret the needs of the socio-economic context. Sustainability / No form of innovation is truly strategic unless it is sustainable. The programme draws on our consolidated expertise in developing sustainable solutions.

Seduction / The Specializing Master offers the necessary tools and methods to work on the aesthetic and experiential appeal of the Product Service System so as to develop innovative, captivating communication strategies capable of expressing its underlying values.

DESIGN AREA

These modules explore different topics and draw upon several kind of expertise needed to work on open ended problems and take an active stance in problem formulation.

History of Italian Design

A complete overview of the cultural roots of Italian design showing how different traits are nowadays current and updated (spirit of entrepreneurship, the innovation as a cultural act, the product innovation related to the change of meaning, the observation of user-context).

Product Service System

A deep investigation on how design becomes strategic tying the brand identity with the product features and the distributive strategy.

Service Design

The modules transfer the design tools related to development and the innovation of a service. A deep attention is dedicated to the service 'tangibilization'.

Social Innovation

The notions of holistic design, radical and systemic change, sustainability, service logic, functional economy, efficiency and sufficiency will be introduced and discussed with regards to the elements characterising a Product Service System.

Design Method Gym

A Design Method Gym is a practical learning experience, rooted in discipline, which accelerates the paths of interpretation and development of the design briefs, data, intuitions technological, semantic and human resources that each design path uses.

MANAGEMENT AREAS

A range of integrated modules that address the requirements of strategic management, enabling students to appraise the factors which impact on innovation and its development.

Strategic Management

The present module is designed to provide students with a basic understanding of the concepts of strategy, strategic decision, strategic innovation and disruptive innovation and to illustrate how they are connected with competitive advantage and value creation in companies.

Marketing

The present modules transfer the main concepts about the marketing process, marketing organization and marketing analytical tools. A particular attention is dedicated to the 4P orchestration and to the innovation perspective based on marketing paradigm.

Technology Management

The present modules transfer the concept of technology adoption as a source of competitive advantage. A specific attention is dedicated to technology driven competition, and to the concepts of complementary assets and network externalities.

Project Management

The present modules transfer the basics related to project management as a process of resource allocation and goal setting. Specific attention is dedicated to the differences of project management in big and medium companies and in environments characterized by low or high innovation pace.

Entrepreneurship and Startup Development

The present modules transfer the concepts related to the roots of entrepreneurial activity, the personal traits of entrepreneur, the startup genesis, the lean start up.

INTERSECTION AREAS

These modules explore different topics at the overlapping between design and management where the former shapes the old managerial science toward new paradigms of innovation, the latter augments the grounding and systemic capability of design.

Innovation Management

Innovation is a way to achieve a competitive advantage. Specifically great attention is addressed to the barriers to innovate, to the set of advantages/disadvantages pertaining innovation, and to closed/open innovation paradigms. A specific focus is centered on Design-Driven innovation.

Strategic Design

These modules explore different design related topics and draw upon several kind of expertise needed to work on open ended problems and take an active stance in problem formulation and strategic proposition.

Design Thinking

The course will focus on the engaging and the management of the array of designers. Specifically the modules show the main tradeoffs related to divergent design management options.

Business modeling

The course leverages extensively on activity-based learning method, where students will directly experience business model design and innovation process by taking both perspectives of a startup – looking for a business model – and incumbent company – in need of business model renewal.

EMPOWERMENT AND SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPEMENT AREA

The empowerment program will help to foster soft skills, for both personal and professional development. The purpose of these modules is to increase autonomy, self-determination and communication skills, to enable students to achieve their professional goals.

Intercultural Integration

The course is designed to develop a broader range of strategies to deal with cultural diversity, turning differences into an asset and to accelerate cultural integration in a team context with distributed leadership. Cultural diversities can be an asset in an intercultural context, leading to creative solutions.

Empowerment

The empowerment is used to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination of all students in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way. The course incorporates basic notion of coaching, start-up empowering to prepare students to align their skills to their future professional career.

Pitch & Presentation Strategies

The main goal of the course is to teach how to give voice to personal ideas in order to have a real impact on the audience through an efficient structure of communication. Delivering a successful presentation means talking to the heart of people, inspiring their minds in the short timings you are allowed.

Creativity & Team Management

This course is designed to allow the participants to develop an understanding of basic dynamics of leading creativity in teams, in the context of organizations. In doing so, the course adopts an experiential approach, engaging the student actively in the learning process.

Strategic Storytelling & Contents narratives

The course is designed to teach the students how to apply a semiotic analysis to the visual landscape; to introduce the basic rules of storytelling and storytelling for business and to offer the students a chance to apply what they've learned in a personal presentation.

Portfolio Empowerment

The course is intended to allow participants to define and develop their own portfolio: a tailor-made communication project that contains project and communicate specific skills and competences. The lecture is designed to acquire the knowledges to design a portfolio; to acquire the ability to define and communicate their own skills and to realize a professional portfolio.

EXTENSIVE DESIGN WORKSHOP

These workshops give the possibility to the students to meet different companies (SME, NGO or Big corporation) and to provide them innovative solutions through strategic briefs. Differently to the intensive workshops, these activities last several weeks.



DESIGN INTENSIVE WORKSHOP

These workshops are «project-based learning» activities to apply specific tools and methodologies centered on cutting-edge topics. Students learn how emerging challenges require a new kind of design thinking.

BUSINESS DESIGN WORKSHOP

Enrich business scenarios through design

During this workshop students meet big corporations and SMEs to develop future innovation trajectories and molding their growth. MDS students jointly with Master in Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management of Parthenope University of Naples, will provide innovative solutions to the companies.



Circular Design

The Circular Design is a new economic system that the European Community embraced, aimed at eliminating waste and promoting the continual use of resources in a virtually endless cycle. During this workshop students will understand how to change the designer's mindset to work within planet's boundaries.



Data-driven Marketing

Students will be trained to identify the role of data in improving the different marketing activities: analysis and prediction of demand, segmentation and targeting of the customer base, definition of customer relationship policies, management of experiences, enforcement of commercial and communication plans.



TIMELINE

DIDACTIC ACTIVITIES - ON CAMPUS - MILAN	INTERNSHIP	GRADUATION SESSION
Theoretical lessons, exercises, workshops, company visits, etc	In Italy or Abroad (500 hrs)	In presence or online
APRIL '26 NOVEMBER '26	DECEMBER '26	JULY '27

APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL

Summer Break Christmas Break

FROM SEPT 2027

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Timing

13th April 2026 - 31st July 2027

Attendance is mandatory for at least 75% of the programme activities.

Language

The Specializing Master is entirely taught in English.

Place

The MDS programme will take place at POLI.design, via Don Giovanni Verità 25, Milano, Campus Bovisa.

Fees

The Specializing Master in Strategic Design costs €15.500,00 VAT free, according to Italian law, Art. 10 Dpr 633/72. The cost of enrollment in the Specializing Master entitles to deduct tax of 19% as falling under “university specialization courses”.

Application

Required documents:

- Updated Curriculum Vitae;
- Motivation letter;
- Portfolio (not mandatory for candidates not having a background in Design or Architecture);
- Copy of the academic certificate to certificate detailing the marks obtained for each examination, or the Diploma Supplement;
- A copy of the student's identity document.

The selection process includes: a) a long-distance test (candidates are not required to take the exam in Milan), b) a first motivational interview via Teams. The faculty might request an additional interview to complete the evaluation process, either in person or by phone.

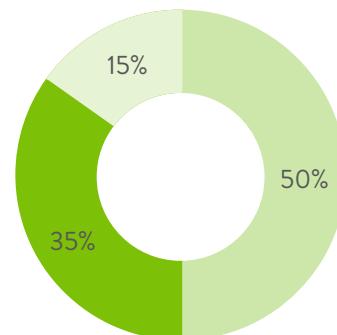
The appointment for Teams interview will be fixed in agreement with the Coordination and Training Office. Candidates who wish to apply to the Specializing Master in Strategic Design should click on this **LINK**.

TARGET

The Specializing Master is reserved to candidates with a University Diploma or a Bachelor or a Master of Science in Engineering, Architecture, Industrial design, Economics, Social and human sciences, that have gained a certain degree of work experience and who intend on enriching their professional careers by working on the border between the design and management fields.

Age clusters

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35



Student profiles



www.polidesign.net/mds

In collaboration with:



The international Business School of Politecnico di Milano. GSoM's mission is to provide its students with a broad education combining management, technology and innovation, in order to benefit companies and society at large.



Since 1919, the University has passionately carried out its institutional role of helping young students develop their talent. The University ensures our students a solid and flexible education, valued in an international perspective, oriented towards the balanced development of knowledge. The students are placed at the center of its activities to project them towards leadership roles and responsibilities.

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