

Specializing Master in Service Design

Full presentation
XIV edition, 2027–2028

Services shape how people live, work, move, learn, heal, and connect.

The world is increasingly becoming service-based: healthcare, banking, education, insurance, mobility, technology, public services, and so on. **Services are the heart of contemporary society, where innovation lies.** Have you noticed?

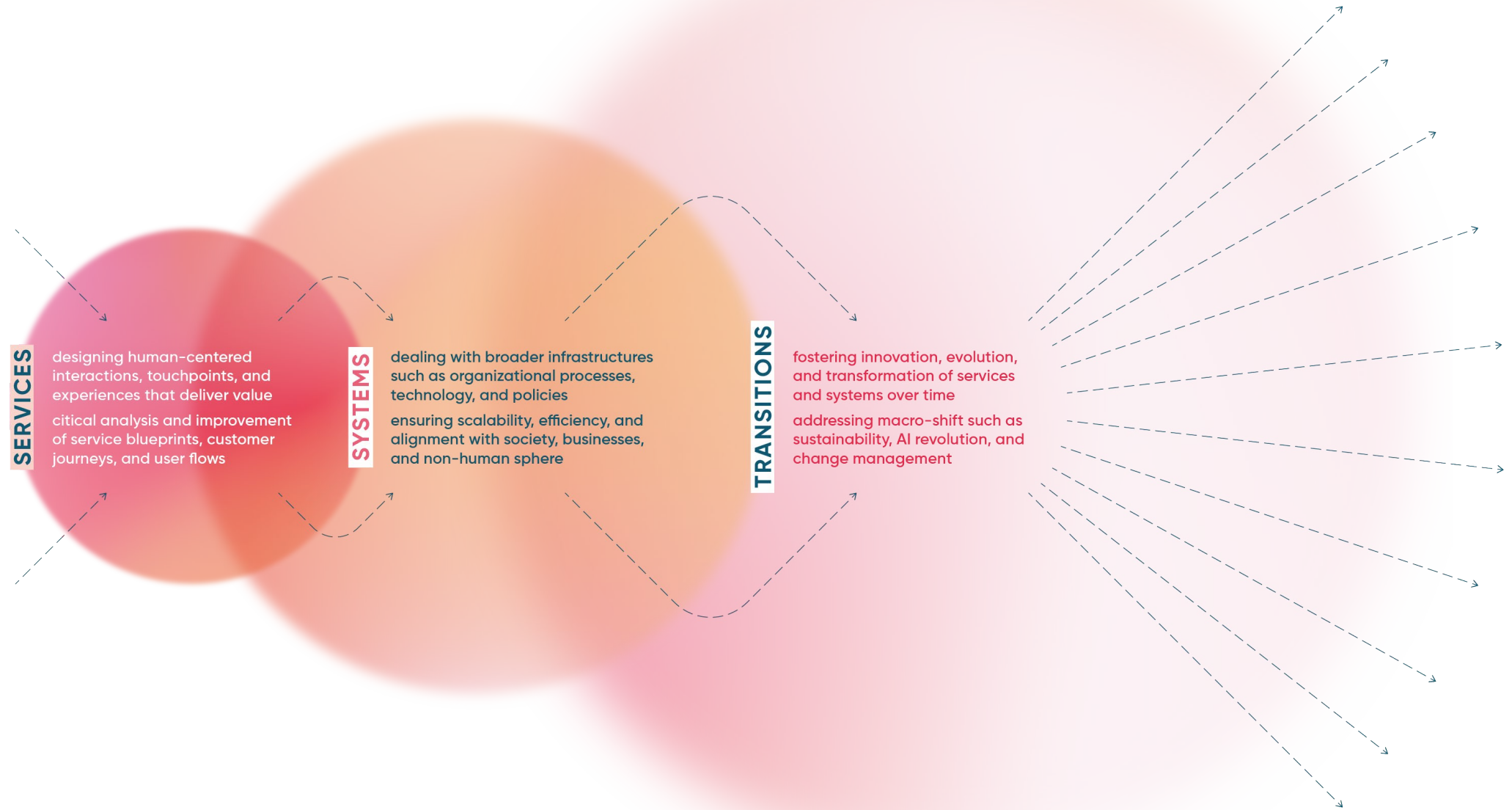
Organizations, societies, and individuals face increasingly complex challenges.

Polycrisis, climate change, AI and digital transformation are just the most well-known of the global challenges.

Values, habits, and visions of the future are being questioned everywhere: **new standards of service are quickly taking over.**

Designing services and experiences means designing value and the desirable future.

Rooted in design thinking and system thinking, **service design is a crucial discipline of our times.**
Its approach has improved and evolved following the challenges and the needs of the economy and the society.



The change-makers.

Service designers play a key role in **driving innovation** within organizations by designing meaningful user experiences and transforming complex systems into accessible, valuable services.

Companies increasingly recognize service design as a **fundamental capability** for addressing evolving user needs, business and social challenges, and sustainability goals.

Under different specializations and fields of application, organizations employ **service design capabilities** through different roles and job titles.

Most sought-after professional qualifications in service design, 2026

Service designer
Service innovation consultant
Customer experience (CX) designer
Customer journey (CJ) designer
Design strategist
Business designer
Transformation consultant
Experience designer
UX/UI designer
User/UX researcher
Social innovation designer
Community facilitator

The MSD, in a nutshell.

Founded in 2013, the **Specializing Master in Service Design** is an international, upper-level training program part of the Politecnico di Milano Design System.

It trains specialists in the fields of **service design** and **service innovation**.

Thanks to a proven and sound methodology that mixes **theoretical knowledge with hands-on experiences** that are renovated every year, and that are enriched by always new lectures on topics at the forefront, each Master edition awards a **new generation of designers and change-makers** that soon go feeding the ranks of renown design agencies, consultancies, companies, as well as public organizations, research centers, and third-sector players.

Details

Qualification: **First-level Master degree in Service Design**

Formative University Credits: **60 CFU (equivalent to 60 ECTS)**

Duration: **6 months of classes + 6 months of field experience (1 year total)**

Next edition: **January 2027 – February 2028**

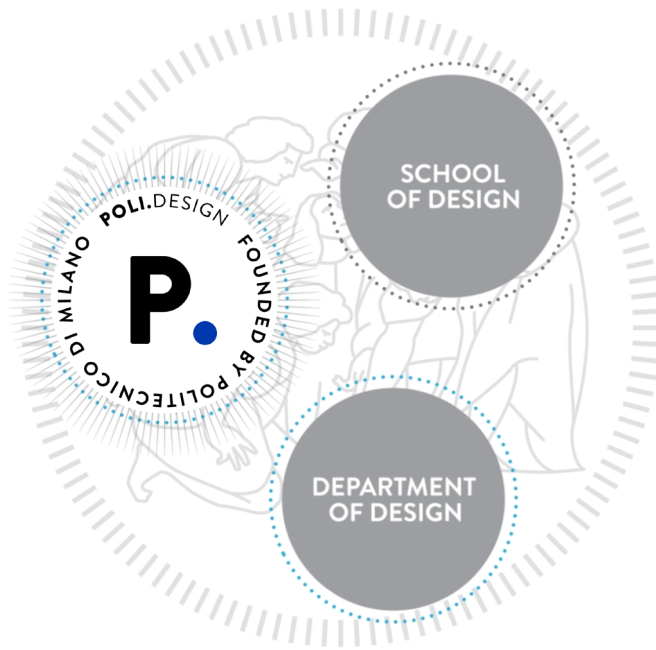
Location: **Polimi Design Campus, Milan, Italy (classes) + Worldwide (field experience)**

Commitment: **full time-like (3 to 5 days per week), 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM**

Teaching language: **English**

Cost: **15'500€** (please visit the website for full prize policies)

The Polimi Design System: structure.



POLI.design is the **post-graduate school in Design of the Politecnico di Milano** that supports and completes the curricular paths of the School of Design, aiming at **professional training** and an effective insertion in the many areas of work in which the designer operates today.

Together with the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano and the Department of Design, POLI.design forms the **Design System of the Politecnico**, an aggregate of resources, skills, structures and laboratories, among the most important in the world.

The **Specializing Master in Service Design** is proudly part of this system.

The Polimi Design System: reputation.

According to the QS World University rankings by subject, Polimi is among the world's top universities. In particular, in *Art & Design 2026*:



1°

in Italy

1°

in the EU

7°

Worldwide

Interested? Keep going.

In 10' you'll have a clear idea of what the MSD offers.

The MSD: a journey started in 2013.

Since its foundation back in 2013, the MSD is an international training programme that builds, year by year, a professional community of change-makers.



13

editions

240+

students & alumni,
from

40+

countries

32

active faculty members

4

annual workshops,
with partner companies

1

lab entirely dedicated to AI

This is a professional community.



Bryan Sabin
MSD Didactic Coordinator

Stefano Maffei
MSD Scientific Director

Francesca Foglieni
MSD Faculty Member

Beatrice Villari
MSD Co-director



Who joins the MSD?

Each MSD edition features participants from diverse backgrounds who approach service design from different perspectives.

You have one of these **backgrounds**:

- design-related (industrial, communication, interaction, fashion, interior)
- other polytechnic fields (architecture, engineering)
- business, administration, management
- marketing, communication, media studies
- psychology
- social sciences, sociology, anthropology
- global studies, economics
- computer sciences, IT, technology
- fine arts

You have one or more of the following **qualities**:

- high motivation, curiosity, and proactiveness
- good creative and relational skills
- critical awareness and a pragmatic mentality
- desire to challenge yourself with complex challenges and setp out your comfort zone
- appetite to work with people, for people

Why joining the MSD?

The motivations that drive participation are varied, as are the profiles that emerge.

You see yourself in one of these **positions, because you are:**

a **recent or upcoming graduate**, have little or no professional experience, and want a highly educational yet professionally enriching program to guide you into the workforce and design market;

a **junior-to-mid level creative professional** working in the design field or creative industries, would like to change role/job, and are looking for a career boost and experience that will strengthen your professional network;

an **experienced white collar** working in a field related to the service industry (business analysis, IT, HR/recruitment, marketing, operations) and want a career switch, or acquire new creative methods and tools to apply to your professional practice.

The MSD pillars.

The Master deploys a proven and sound methodology that mixes theoretical knowledge with hands-on experiences that are renovated every year.

Learn-by-doing



Real challenges, real organizations



Multidisciplinary teams



What students find?

Different backgrounds and motivations, a common mindset and shared goals:

Development of hard skills, design methodologies, and tools

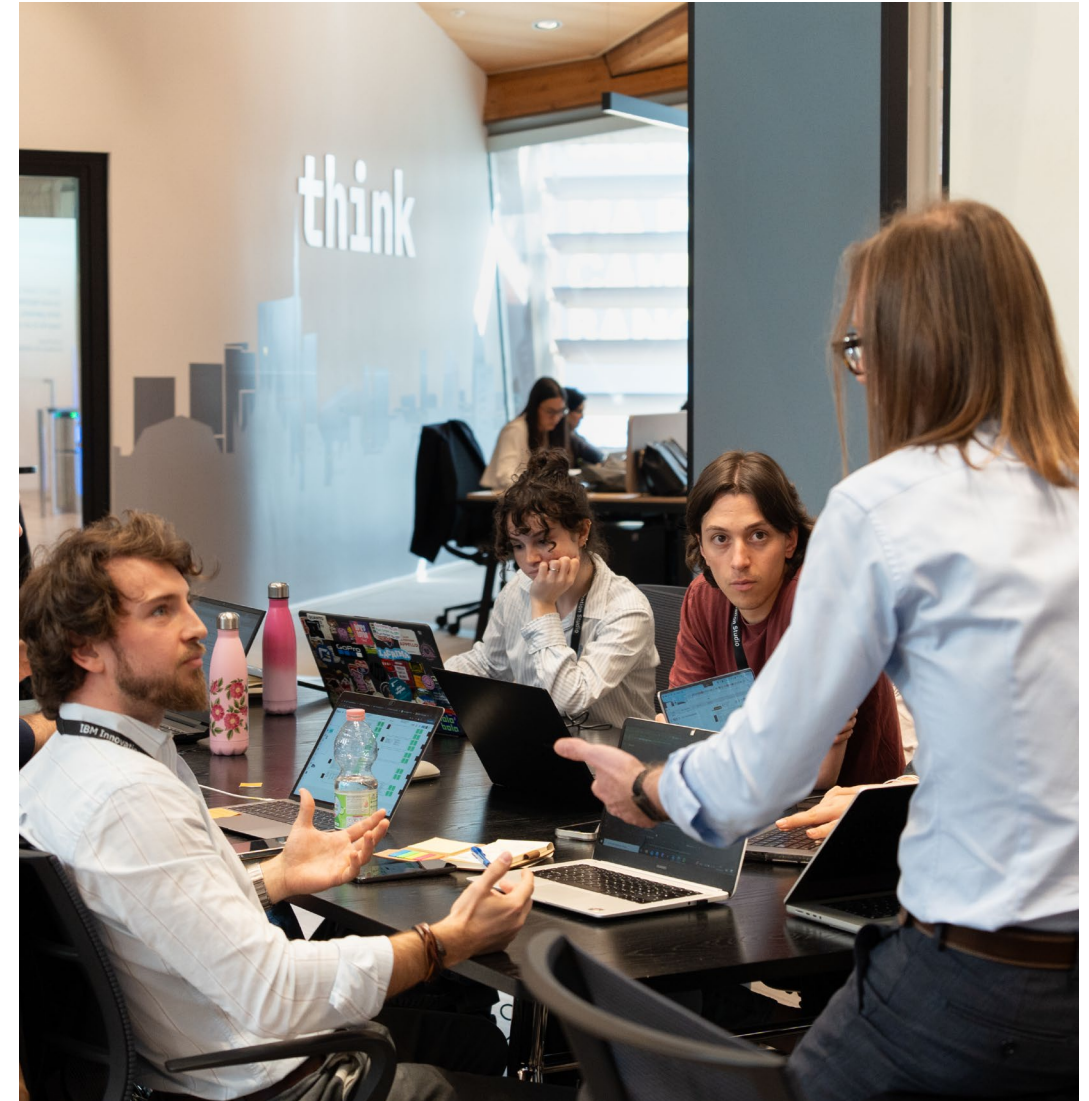
Practical work on real-world projects and development of personal portfolio

Improvement of soft skills and career approach

Exposure to an international and diverse environment

Building professional relationships with companies and practitioners

Creating job opportunities, directions, and career paths



Where do they go?

3 data to understand the potential of the MSD programme:

97.6

% of **occupational rate** in the field within 1 year of graduating

80.3

% of **employees** (on a dependent contract)

85.2

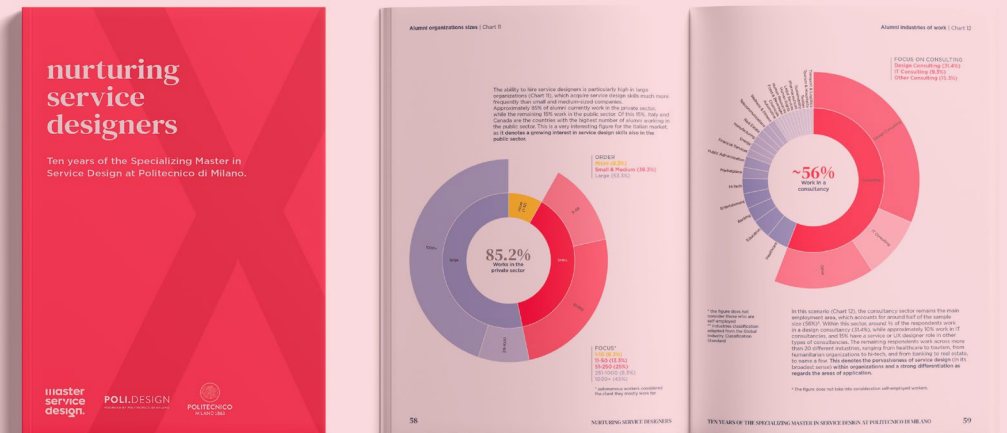
% that work in the **private sector**

Do you appreciate data, facts, and figures?

Do you want to know more about the employment opportunities after the MSD programme?

You should definitely take a look at the MSD 10-years report:

<https://share.hsforms.com/1ra0DhMBeQqmPT0l6Gv5Tw4rs5n>

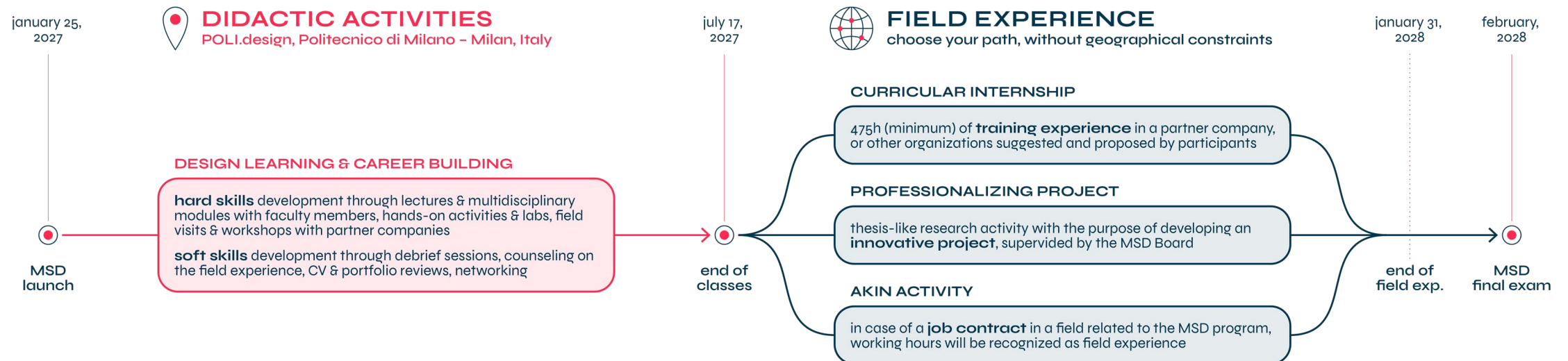


More than a Master.

A learning experience built around projects, people, and practice.

One year, straight to the point.

The programme lasts 12 months + the graduation session. The first half of the year is in classroom, the other half is on field.



The MSD didactic activities.

Learn > Apply > Grow

The didactic activities of the Master are based on a hands-on and experimental approach, and consist of a series of **modules**, **workshops**, and **labs**, each led by a different faculty member.

Each module adds a fundamental **building block** to students' growth in terms of developing hard design skills.

The didactic activities are complemented by a series of sessions dedicated to developing **soft skills** and **career building** (we'll explain this better in a few slides).

The modules are divided into the following clusters:

Service Design Basics & Tools

Service Business & Management

Emerging Technologies & Digital Services

Human-Centered Innovation & Participatory Futures

Future Studies, Systems Thinking & Sustainable Design

+

Service Design Workshops, with partner companies

This is how we like to visualize it.



learn

SERVICE DESIGN BASICS & TOOLS

Service Design Fundamentals & Tools
Secondary Research: Context & Data
Primary Research: Design Ethnography
Concept Generation & Service Prototyping

SERVICE BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Design-Driven Innovation
Business Strategy
Business Modelling & Planning

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES & DIGITAL SERVICES

Interaction Design
UX Prototyping
Gen-AI for Service Design
Critique & Ethics of Gen-AI

HUMAN-CENTRED INNOVATION & PARTICIPATORY FUTURES

Facilitation & Co-Design
Service Design for Public Sector
Social Design

FUTURE STUDIES, SYSTEM THINKING & SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Service Evaluation
Systemic Design
Future Studies & Speculative Design
Sustainable Design & Circular Economy



apply

SERVICE DESIGN WORKSHOPS, with PARTNER COMPANIES

Weekly or biweekly design labs experimenting on a real brief proposed by a partner company. Depending on active partnerships and collaborations, workshops can address different industries, such as: Insurance, Banking & Finance, Healthcare & Pharma, Transportation, Energy & Manufacturing, Policy, Public Administration & Public Services, Entertainment, Food & Beverages, and many more.



grow

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Communication, Storytelling, Group Dynamics, Teambuilding, Collaboration & Leadership
Critical Thinking, Creative Problem Solving, Decision Making, Adaptability & Creativity

EMPOWERMENT & CAREER BUILDING

Networking with Practitioners & Companies, Field Experience Counseling, CV & Portfolio Reviews
Debrief & Feedback Sessions, Empowerment, Self-awareness, Future-orientation

Service Design Basics & Tools

This cluster is about gaining familiarity with the methodologies, approaches, and tools that are most commonly used and adopted in service design practice.

An example of module within this cluster is:

Concept generation & service prototyping

Led by:

[Marc Garcia i Fortuny](#)

Head of Strategy and Customer Experience @ NTT Data

Lenght:

5 full days (full week)

Learning outcomes:

- **Take your project from idea to pre-implementation**
- **Learn why & how to ideate a service**
- **Learn why & how to prototype a service**
- **Learn the frameworks of these two interconnected approaches and processes**



Service Business & Management

This cluster focuses understanding the different innovation and business strategies, and connecting service design ideas to business and social models typically adopted in the service sector.

An example of module within this cluster is:

Business strategy & planning

Led by:

[Daniele Radici](#)

Freelance Innovation & Strategy Advisor

Lenght:

5 full days (two half weeks)

Learning outcomes:

- **Business models desing in the service area**
- **Difference between business modelling and business planning**
- **Most relevant business design tools (BMC, S.W.O.T., Context Map)**
- **Business model innovation techniques**



Emerging Technologies & Digital Services

This cluster focuses on learning how to design services that integrate AI, data, and digital channels into the solution, with a particular focus on the user experience (UX) and interaction (UI).

An example of module within this cluster is:

Interaction design & UX prototyping

Led by:

[Payton Meyer](#)

Senior Interaction Designer @ Google Search

Length:

4 full days + 2 half days dedicated to learning Figma

Learning outcomes:

- **Interaction design key concepts, principles, and methods**
- **Relation with service design and the larger product development process**
- **Overview of tools and techniques used in UX and UI design**
- **Design, prototyping, and user testing of digital interactions**



Human-Centered Innovation & Participatory Futures

This cluster delves into the potential of design thinking applied with service design tools and methods to stakeholder facilitation, engagement, and management.

An example of module within this cluster is:

Service design for public sector

Led by:

[Ottla Arrigoni](#)

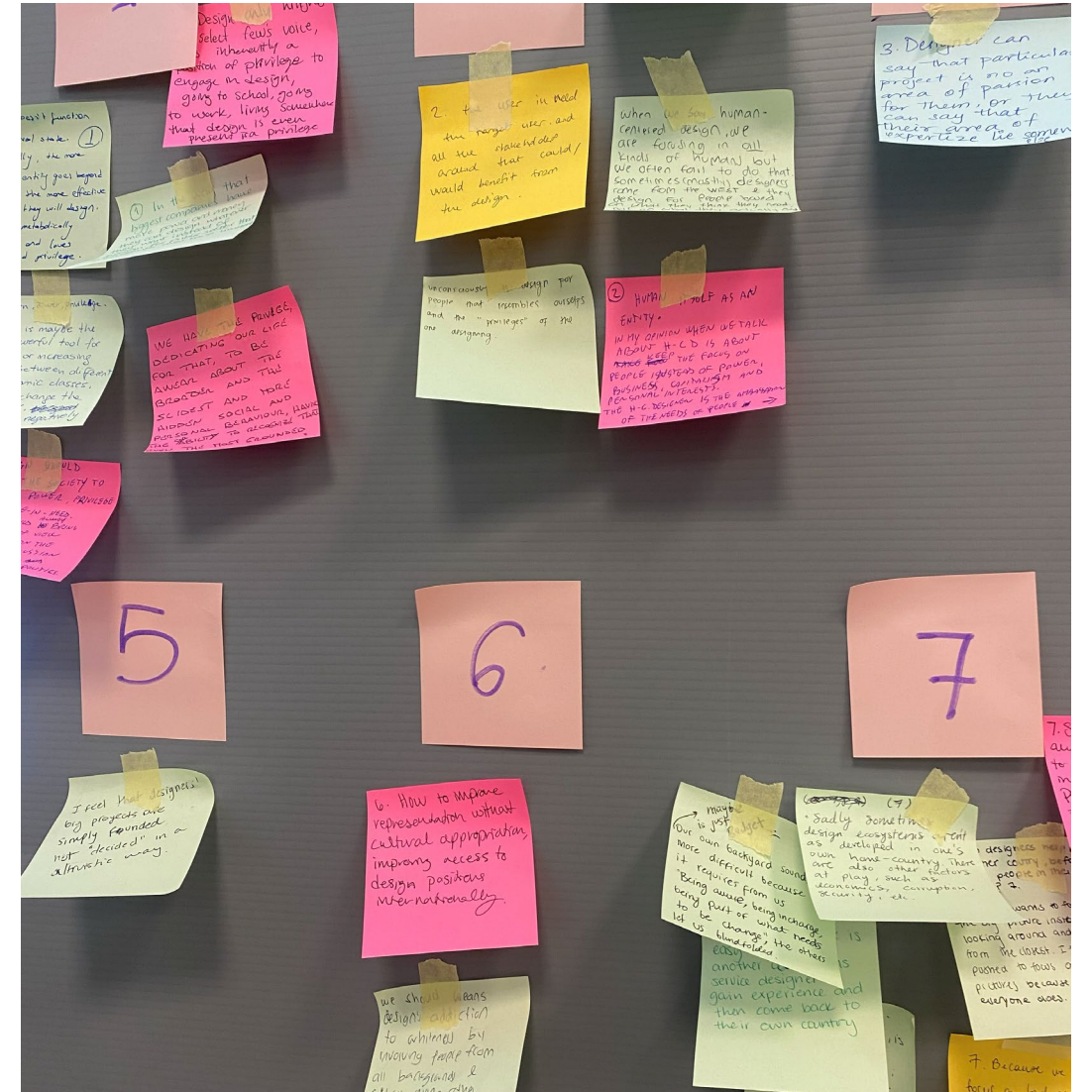
Policy Analyst & Designer @ the European Commission

Length:

3 full days

Learning outcomes:

- **Role of design in transforming public and third sector services**
- **Navigate briefs of complex ecosystems of institutions, users, and deliveries**
- **Co-design and systems thinking applied to real-world challenges**
- **Design services grounded in community needs, ethical engagement, and practical constraints**



Future Studies, Systems Thinking & Sustainable Design

This cluster highlights the potential of service design as a transformative force, addressing contemporary social, economic, and environmental challenges.

An example of module within this cluster is:

Future studies & speculative design

Led by:

[Bec Chau](#) & [Maria Elges](#)

Lead of Design and Digital @ the Public Sector Capabilities Index, UCL (Bec)
Strategic Designer @ Arup Foresight (Maria)

Length:

3 full days

Learning outcomes:

- **Key design futuring methods, including horizon scanning, futures wheels, causal layered analysis, and backcasting**
- **Emerging signals, trends, and systemic drivers shaping possible futures**
- **Future scenarios using speculative and narrative design approaches**



And then, there are workshops and labs.

In collaboration with partner companies, workshops are the flagship of MSD teaching and the bridge between academia and industry.

Real brief proposed by real companies



End-to-end design process



Professional presentations



Each MSD edition has corporate partners.

Each one participating in a curricular workshop or lab as *the client* that proposes the challenge.

Main Partner (since 2025)



Current active partnerships



Former partnerships (last 2 years)





The Main Partnership with:



Timing:
2025–ongoing

Context:

Generali is one of the largest and most complex insurance organizations in Italy and Europe: a system made of thousands of people, dozens of business units, deep technological infrastructures, a dense network of agencies spread across the national territory.

Within this ecosystem, the *Customer Experience Design and Digital Channels* team (known internally and informally as “CX”) is the highly skilled group of professionals with a specific strategic position inside Generali, at the intersection of customer insight, digital innovation, and service design.

Long-term mission:

The partnership between MSD and Generali aims to leverage the CX unit's solid experience to further integrate design culture into the organization, making it a more structural practice and extending it across contexts and decision-makers where design is not yet a default resource.

An example of workshop within this collaboration is:

Moments of Life (2025)



With: **GENERALI**

Led by:

[Laura Trivilino](#)

Freelance Design Strategist, WS Lead @ MSD

Lenght:

2 full weeks (with 2 off-sites)

Challenge:

How can insurance shift from a transactional service to a real-life companion?

The brief challenged the students to design meaningful tools and services for moments of personal transition – from approaching adulthood to taking care of the elderly. Leveraging on empathy-driven methods, the teams imagined a more meaningful and human-centred insurance, aligned with Generali's mission to be a 'lifetime partner'.





The Collaboration with:

Timing:
2025–ongoing

Context:
IBM is a leading multinational technology and consulting company. It specializes in artificial intelligence (AI), hybrid cloud computing, enterprise software, infrastructure, and cutting-edge quantum technology.

In the last few years, Generative AI underwent a significant evolution, redefining its role within companies and in design processes. The current “Adoption Era” is characterized by its maturity and commoditization. In this context, designers need to rethink their role and workflows to fully leverage the potential of AI, including new possibilities offered by Agentic AI – which is triggering a sort of new cycle.

Long-term mission:
The collaboration between IBM and MSD revolves around the *Gen–AI Lab for Service Design*, an experimental Lab developed within the MSD didactic activities and led by IBM experts, designers, and practitioners.

The collaboration revolves around the:

Gen-AI Lab for Service Design (2025–ongoing)

Transforming the role of the Designer between Generative Variability and Creative Homogeneity

With: 

Led by:

IBM team of designers, engineers, and managers led by [Davide Ferraris](#)

Lenght:

6 appointments across 4 months (with 2 off-sites)

Challenge:

How should the practice of service design evolve to improve and best exploit the possibilities offered by a technology as radical and powerful as Gen-AI?

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen-AI) is disrupting services, experiences, and how we envision and design them. Thanks to the collaboration with IBM, the MSD students become pioneers of the Gen-AI “adoption phase”, redefining the role of tech and designers themselves, unleashing the full potential of both.

 watch the [full webinar on YouTube](#).



Another example of workshop with a company is:

The WAU! City (2026)

With: **WAU!**
WE ARE URBAN

Led by:

[Chiara Monteleone](#) & [Lesley Ann Culla](#)

Freelance Experience Design Lead and Researcher, WS Lead @ MSD (Chiara)

Freelance Service Designer, Creative Storyteller and Photographer (Lesley)

Lenght:

2 full weeks (with 1 field activity)

Challenge:

How could civic participation renew and evolve from isolated volunteering into long-term participation?

WAU! Milano has spent over twenty years promoting active citizenship, collective care of public spaces, and participatory volunteering practices throughout the city. MSD students supported them in leveraging the ecosystem of citizens, volunteers, associations, and local actors built over the years, designing a systemic and self sustaining loop of participation.



Another example of workshop with a company is:

Evolving the Role of the Pharmacy (2026)



With:

Led by:

[Enrico Tedoldi](#)

Designer, Director and Lecturer, WS Lead @ MSD

Length:

1 full weeks (with 1 field visit)

Challenge:

How can AFM improve the service it offers and redefine and evolve the role of the pharmacy itself?

The pharmacy is not a shop, but it should be a place of orientation, education, and ongoing support — grounded in real scientific competence and in a relationship of trust built over time with the community.

To do so, the class divided into 4 teams, each focused on a specific thematic area: parenting, nutrition, recovery support, and veterinary care.



The soft power of soft skills.

In addition to learning vertical and hard design skills, the programme offers a series of sessions specifically dedicated to the development of soft skills.

Dedicated lectures



Debrief sessions



Teambuilding activities



An example of lecture dedicated to soft skills is:

Teambuilding & group dynamics

Led by:

[Chiara Annovazzi](#)

PhD, Social Psychologist and Career Counsellor expert in Life Design

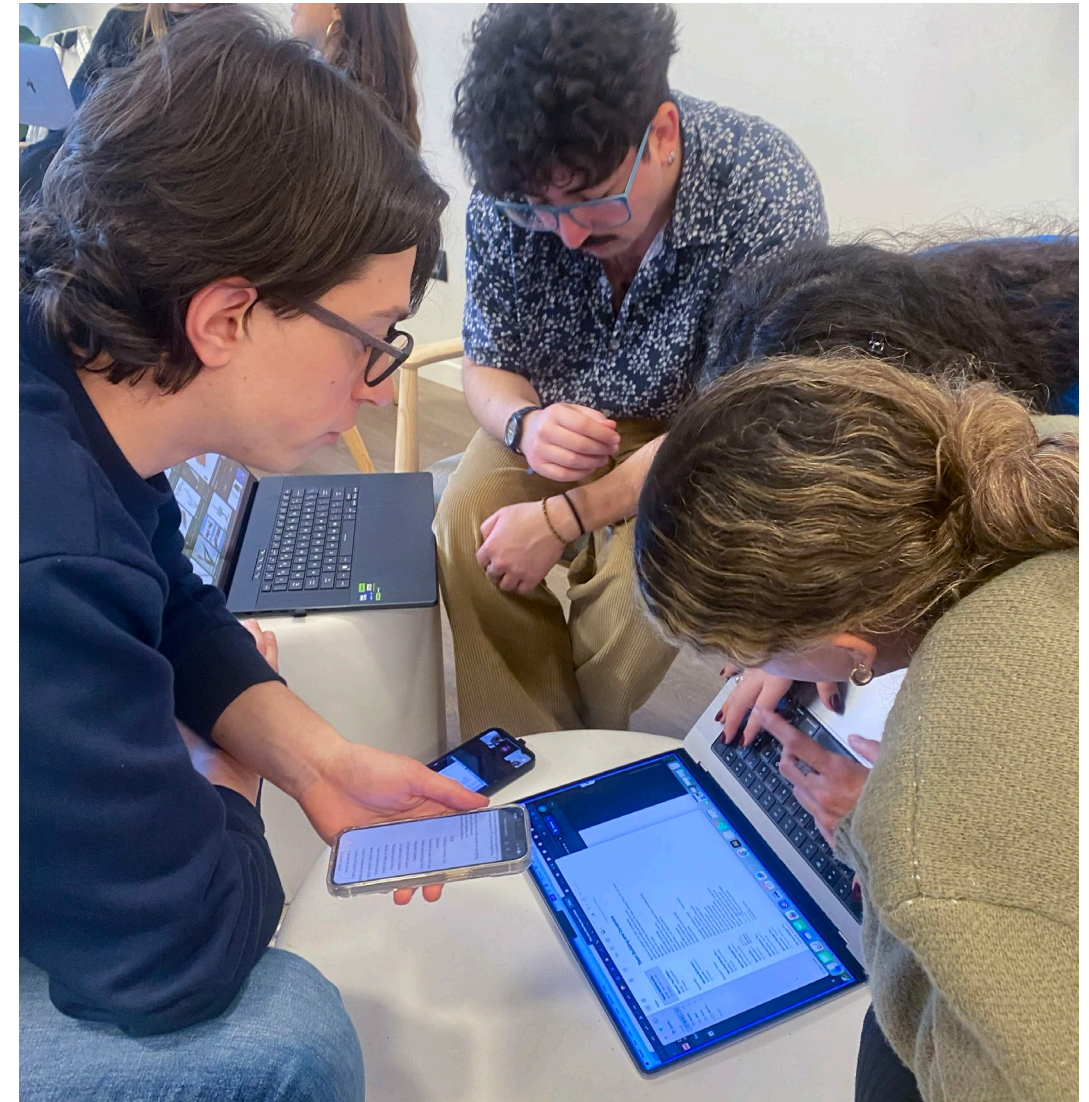
Lenght:

1 day (at the beginning of the programme)

Content:

Designers never work alone. The module offers a concise exploration of group work from a social psychological perspective, with a specific focus on roles, cognitive biases, and the decision-making processes that occur in collaborative settings, such as groupthink. The spotlight is on how these elements influence group dynamics and the often-implicit choices made.

The ultimate goal of the lecture is promoting greater awareness of the mechanisms that influence group functioning, and fostering better collaboration along the whole programme's group activities.



Empower yourself, design your career.

Throughout the programme, students will have several opportunities dedicated to professional growth, networking, and career development.

Career orientation



Portfolio reviews



Networking



Real network, real opportunities.

From field experience to professional practice.

The MSD field experience.

Explore > Practice > Graduate

After the end of the classes in July, each student will have to choose the field experience option they prefer from the **three available options**, and complete a minimum of 475 hours.

The three options allow for a **personalized field experience** based on different student profiles, while ensuring a relevant and meaningful path aligned with the MSD program.

In parallel to the field experience, each student will autonomously work on the **graduation project** (we'll explain this better in a few slides).

The three options that you have are:

Curricular internship
Professionalizing project
Akin activity
+
Graduation project

option 1

Curricular internship

475h (minimum) of training experience in a partner company, or other organizations suggested and proposed by participants

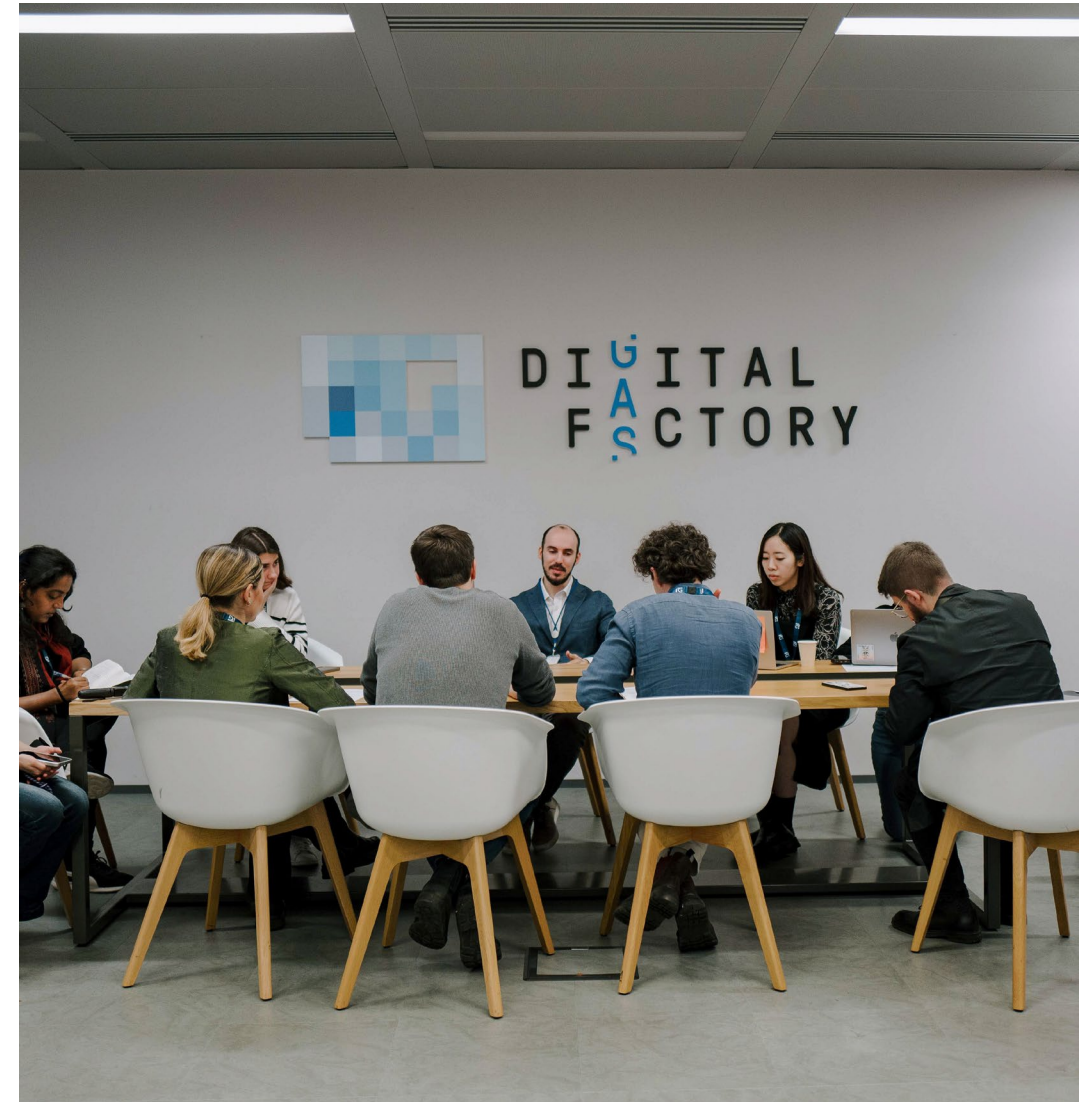
Applications and match-making:
May 2027 to September 2027

Timing to carry out the internship:
mid-July 2027 to January 2028

Details:

A Curricular Internship is a training experience to be carried out in Italy or abroad, at public or private institutions (companies, firms, organizations, associations, research centers).

Starting in May, students interested in internships will begin actively searching for opportunities. On top of the opportunities shared by the POLI.design's Talent Placement office and by the Master Board, students are free to look for positions that meet their interests.



option 2

Professionalizing project

thesis-like research activity with the purpose of developing an innovative project, supervised by the MSD Board

Abstract submission:

September 2027

Mid-reviews:

October and December 2027 + extra appointments (if needed)

Final submission:

January 2028 (before the graduation)

Details:

It's a research activity that involves the in-depth study of issues shared between the student and the Board, with the purpose of developing an innovative project as the outcome.

Upon agreement with the Board and provided the student manages the contacts, the professionalizing project can involve a company or an external reviewer as an adjunct supervisor.



option 3

Akin activity

in case of a job contract in a field related to the MSD program, working hours will be recognized as field experience

Timing to carry out the akin activity:
mid-July 2027 to January 2028

Details:

In case the student would sign a work contract in a related field to the Master program, POLI.design will proceed with the recognition of the working hours as the field experience.

Another option would be an internal internship to support the teaching activities and/or the Master Board in activities related to the research field.

Please note: as established by paragraph 4 of article 14 - Presidential Decree no. 394/1999, non-EU students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours per week within European Union, up to a total of 1,040 hours per year.



In all three cases, after the didactic activities and in relation to the field experience, each student will work on the:

Graduation project

Project proposal:
September 2027

Mid-review:
November 2027

Final submission:
February 2028 (final exam)

Details:

The graduation projects assesses the analytical, theoretical, and practical skills acquired by students throughout the Master programme.

The graduation project will be related to the field experience path that each student will undertake.

It will be presented at the final exam.



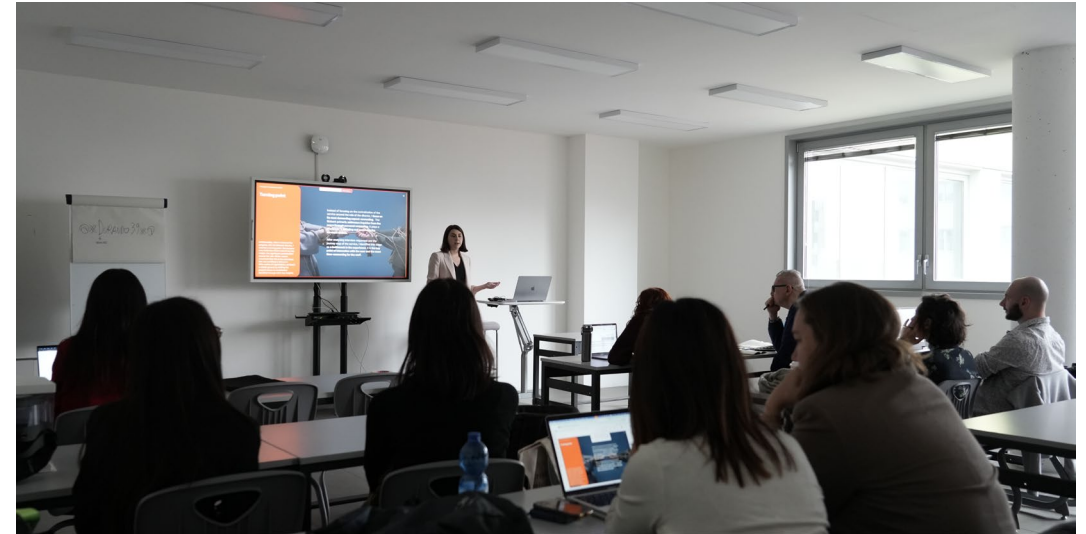
The MSD final exam.

Project presentation and graduation

In order to receive the First-level Master Degree, each student must take an **individual final exam**.

The final exam consists of the **presentation of the graduation projects** and the **official proclamation**, which will happen at the end of the same day, or the day after: the graduation day date will be defined by the end of the year.

The Commission will determine the final grade for each student expressed in $_ / 110$, as established by the Italian University marking system. The vote is the result of **the whole didactic path plus the final exam vote**.



Become part of the community.



Start your service design career.

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Customer journey (CJ) designer
Design strategist
Business designer
Transformation consultant
Experience designer
UX/UI designer
User/UX researcher
Social innovation designer
Community facilitator

Find your role in the job market.

As a **Corporate Service Designer**,

you will work in a large or small, local or international company and will apply service design capabilities to outline better customer and employee experiences, improve business performance through user-centered strategies, and lead service design projects both internally and with the organization's clients.

As a **Service Designer for the Public Sector**,

working with governments and public institutions, you will turn policy and governance into more accessible, efficient, and citizens-centred services. You will analyze user needs, implement human-centered processes, and introduce systemic innovation to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and societal impact.

As a **Service Design Consultant**,

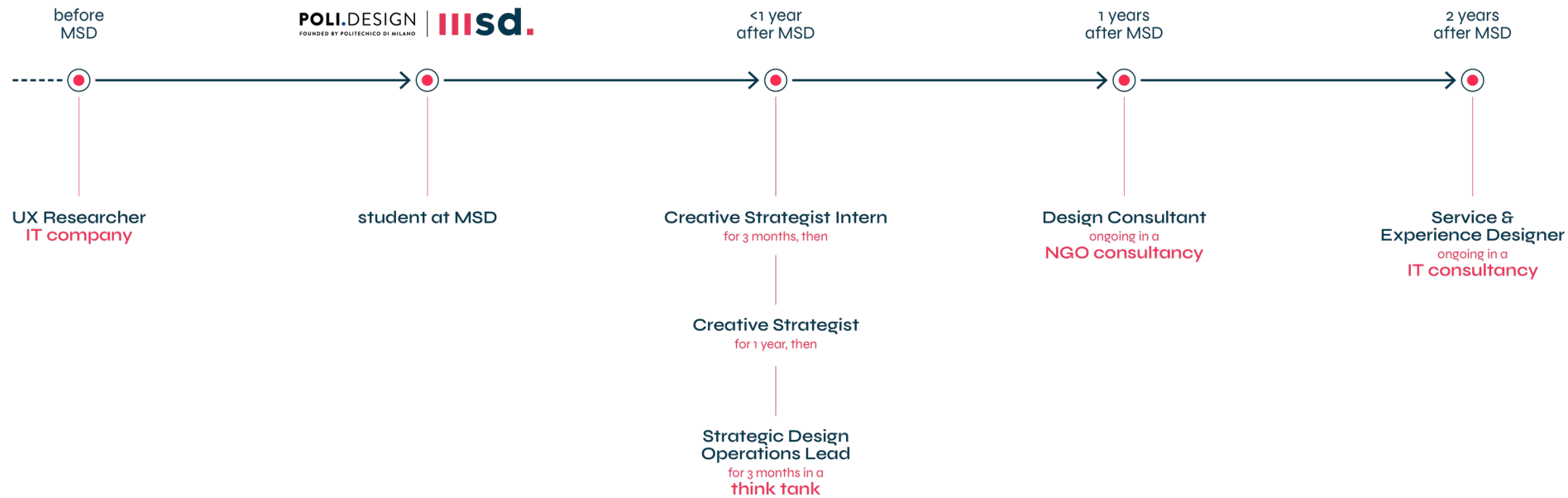
you will support large and small organizations in solving complex challenges through research, ideation, facilitation, and strategic visioning by applying service design methodologies and tools. Working across business units, roles, and competences you will support executives and managers in taking business decisions.

As a **Freelance Service Designer**,

as an independent professional, you will collaborate with clients across industries to co-create, co-design, and implement innovative services and experiences. You will leverage design thinking, entrepreneurship, and cross-sector expertise to deliver customized, impactful, and sustainable solutions connecting clients around the world.

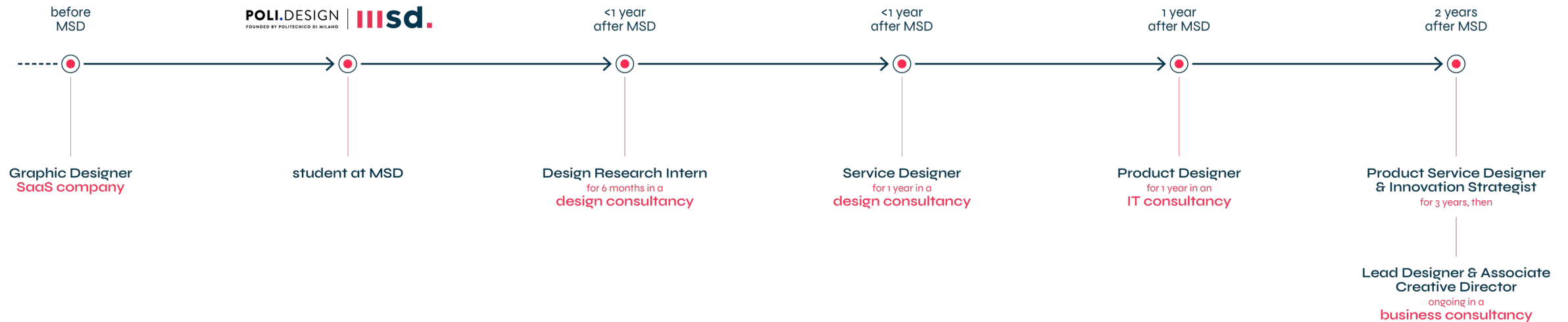
Alumni career stories.

LinkedIn Alumni and alumnae career highlights: **senior level**.



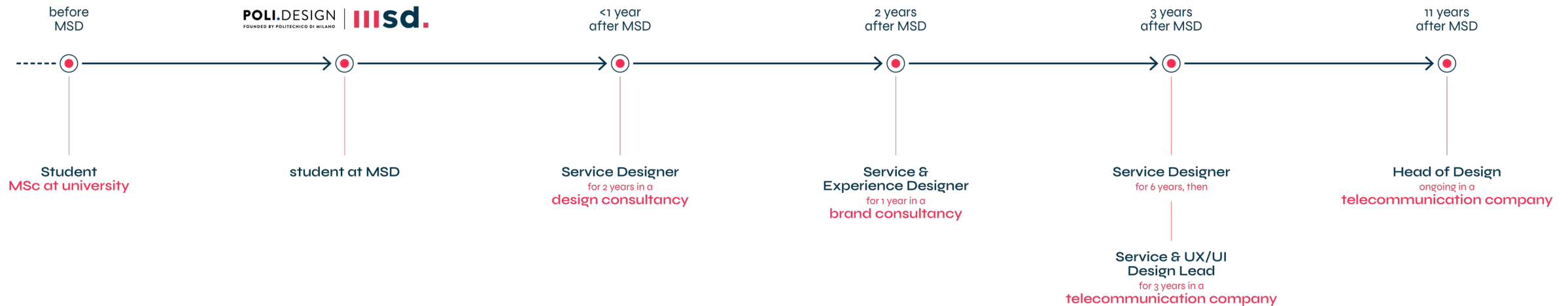
Alumni career stories.

LinkedIn Alumni and alumnae career highlights: **lead level**.



Alumni career stories.

LinkedIn Alumni and alumnae career highlights: **head level**.



Alumni voices.

“

The Master's programme provided me with a solid foundation, equipping me with a shared vocabulary, a methodological approach, practical tools, and a clear understanding of how a design process should progress. However, the internship showed me that the critical issue is almost never the method itself, but the conditions surrounding it. In everyday practice, design is constantly affected by constraints and external forces such as changing times, shifting priorities, partial information, specialised language, decisionmaking levels and implicit expectations. This means that design is not just about doing the stages properly, but knowing how to keep them going when they become unstable. This is a difference that the Master's programme is designed to prepare you for, but which can only be fully grasped through direct experience.

Lucrezia, 24 (Italy)

“

The Specializing Master in Service Design gave me a foundation of methodologies, tools and frameworks to apply during the design challenges I lived on in the field experience. I need to highlight that the most relevant teachings were about:

- Navigating uncertainty and the unknown;
- Collaborating with people of different backgrounds and different cultures by finding ways that let us establish common grounds and that allowed us to share leadership;
- To think about complexity and complicated as different concepts that will drive different experiences.

Paula, 30 (Colombia)

Your next big step.

A life-changing journey toward professional growth, through service design.

Milano, the European design capital.

Each MSD edition features participants from many different countries spread across almost all over the world.

42

total **different countries**

75.8

% of **international students**
(non-Italians, last three MSD editions)

50.8

% of **MSD alumni** that work in Italy

Italy is the EU leader in the design sector. Milano acts as the focal point, driving a major portion of the sector's national value.

1°

Italy's position compared to other EU countries,
both in terms of **number of employees** and **total revenues**

21.5

% of **design workers** in Italy compared to the total of EU countries

Fondazione Symbola, Deloitte Private, POLI.design, ADI – *Design Economy 2026*

Join the global community of service designers, innovators, and change-makers.

Work on real challenges



Build the profile organizations are looking for



Kickstart your design career



To take part in the MSD.

3 steps process

Application

Follow the [application link](#) and apply both on POLI.design and Politecnico di Milano websites.

Selection

Desk evaluation will be done on:

- **CV**
- **portfolio** (if you have one)
- **motivational letter**

Live evaluation will be done via:

- **official interview** (online or in person)

The selection will be made by the Commission.

Enrollment

If the selection is successful, the candidate can **proceed with the enrollment** and secure a place in the next MSD class.

Please note that POLI.design and the MSD Commission **process applications in chronological order**, until places are filled.

Write your story, design your career.



Book a call.

Follow this link and book an info chat with the Didactic Coordinator: [book via Microsoft Teams](#)

Or send an email to: bryan.sabin@polidesign.net and hello@polidesign.net

Specializing Master in Service Design

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