

Nordic Design Futures, 2 ECTS

in collaboration with Aalto University Summer School

Teacher-in-charge: Sushant Passi

Level of course: Bachelors, Undergraduate studies

ECTS workload: 2 ECTS

Grading: pass-fail

Language: English

Course overview

Nordic Design Futures is a two-week intensive interdisciplinary course that immerses students in distinctive approaches to the design of products, materials, and systems within the Nordic context. The course engages participants with design thinking in relation to contemporary Nordic design trajectories, with emphasis on functionalism, ecological principles, foresight, aesthetics, materiality, and critical design.

In the first phase, students develop a grounded theoretical understanding of these themes within the socio-cultural contexts of the Nordic countries, with a particular focus on Finland, through visual materials, films, site-based references, and interactive dialogues. The second phase shifts toward hands-on exploration through workshops, site visits, and material-based experiments, engaging students in both collaborative and individual practice.

The course fosters a holistic creative process moving from ideation to the development of tangible artefacts, with a strong emphasis on foresight thinking and scenario-building. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically question design challenges and formulate their own design approaches grounded in Nordic design practice, while developing the ability to document, communicate, and present their design processes and outcomes. The students are also encouraged to reflect on and translate these perspectives into their own cultural and broader international contexts.

Learning outcomes

After this summer school programme, the students are able to -

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of Nordic design history, contemporary practices, and design-thinking, with a particular focus on the Finnish context.
- Apply foresight thinking and ecologically driven product and material design methods through individual and team-based assignments, workshops, and site visits
- Integrate critical design and design-thinking approaches into the creative process to define, challenge, and address design problems in innovative ways.
- Communicate and present design processes and outcomes that combine theoretical insight with practical, material-based experimentation.

Assessment

The course is graded as pass/fail.

The course assignments include:

- Hands on tasks, from ideation to building physical prototypes.
- Design thinking exercises and workshops.
- Analysing, visualising and presenting outcomes (with peer reviews).
- Working on tasks in groups, as well as individually.
- Documenting work, including keeping a visual learning diary (physical or virtual) and updating this diary with short home tasks/ research assignments.

Course workload

[Preparation exercise]	2h
Contact hours, intensive course participation	30h
[Individual or team student work]	22h
Total	54h (2 ECTS)

Prerequisites

Participants must have completed a high school or vocational degree or equivalent by the time the course starts. However, they do not have to be a degree student at a university to participate in our courses. This course does not require previous experience in the topic.

