Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification
BDes/MEDes Product Design



Credit: Nella Piatek 2021

Please note that this programme specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the Academic Year.

1. Programme Details	
Programme Title	BDes/MEDes Product Design
School	Innovation and Technology
Programme Leader	Kirsty Ross
Award to be Conferred	BDes/MEDes
Exit Awards	Core Stage 1: Certificate of Higher Education Stage 2: Diploma of Higher Education BDes/MEDes Stage 3: BDes Stage 4 : BDes(Hons) Year 4 (MEDes) BDes Hons Stage 5 : MEDes
SCQF Level	BDes 7-10 MEDes 7-11
Credits	BDes 480 MEDes 600
Mode of Study	Full time
HECOS Code	

Academic Session	2026-27
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2026

Awarding Institution	The University of Glasgow
Teaching Institutions	The Glasgow School of Art
Campus	Glasgow
Lead School/Board of Studies	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools/Board of Studies	N/A
Programme Accredited By (PSRBs)	N/A

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	Standard: ABBB, including a literate subject Minimum: BBCC, including a literate subject
A Levels	Standard: ABB and GCSE English at A/7 grade or above Minimum: BBC and GCSE English at A/7 grade or above
Other	International Baccalaureate: 30 points overall in the Diploma, including 18 at Higher Level, normally including English and Maths. Irish Leaving Certificate: Four Highers at H2 or above - subjects required as per Scottish Highers. Other eligible qualifications for entry include Foundation Diplomas in Art & Design, Higher National Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation Degrees, Level 3 Diplomas, and other Further Education and Higher Education qualifications in related subjects. Entrants may begin their studies in Stage 2 or Stage 3

	depending on the level of prior qualifications and other entry criteria. Detailed information about the required grades for individuals holding or studying these qualifications can be access on the website. Applicants from outside the UK and Ireland should also consult our International student pages for details of accepted qualifications from specific countries. Applicants who do not meet entry requirements through formal qualifications but can demonstrate experience, skills and abilities at the appropriate level can also be considered. Additional entry requirements: Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio or work and may be required to attend an Interview as part of their admissions assessment.
English Language Requirements	Applicants who are not a national of, nor have obtained a degree in one of the countries on the approved UKVI exemption list or those who require a Student Visa, will need to provide evidence of their English language ability. GSA's preferred test is the IELTS for UKVI (Academic) test taken at a UKVI approved test centre. GSA require all students, who require a student visa, to meet the following requirements to gain entry: • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6 with a minimum of 5.5 in all components; • An alternative Accepted English Language Test which can be found on the Postgraduate 'How to Apply' page of the GSA website.

3. Programme Introduction
Product Design at the School of Innovation and Technology reframes design as a critical interface between society, technology and ecology, producing graduates capable of demonstrating autonomy, creativity, and expertise across the spectrum of Product Design practice, from artefacts, services and systems, to interactions and experiences. Students can apply to enter the programme directly into Stage 1, 2 or 3 depending on their level of entry qualifications. Students entering directly to Stage 2 or 3 are supported with enhanced transition through tailored induction workshops and pastoral support throughout the year of entry. The programme fosters a transdisciplinary, globally aware design practice, equipping students with strategic and creative design skills. Moving beyond traditional industrial design, curricula emphasises experience, systems thinking, and collaboration across fields such as healthcare, accessibility and environmental design.

The ability to generate concepts, make material prototypes, and test design proposals with people is fundamental to this approach and the studio-based teaching and learning principles that underpin it. Our students' experiences of studio-based teaching and learning are complemented by courses that offer critical writing opportunities, and, in stage 2 and 3, students can select from a range of elective courses offering thematic focus and specialist methodologies which contribute towards each student's emerging design identity and individual practice.

The programme offers students a choice of two pathways: the four-year BDes (Hons) Degree and the five-year Master of European Design (MEDes) Degree, both of which engage students in a range of live industry projects, international collaborations and cultural experiences. The BDes (Hons) and MEDes share a common ''core'' in the first two years of study. In Stage 2, which is the second year of the programme, students can choose the educational journey that best suits their academic objectives: either BDes or MEDes.

BDes Product Design
The Product Design BDes (Hons) programme pathway emphasises designing for society; a highly collaborative and creative practice that equips students with skills which combine research, criticality, material exploration and visual communication to generate innovative design propositions. Our students work beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, engaging with specialist expertise from other domains, such as science and technology, learning to understand and response to context – social, cultural, economic, environmental and technological – through studio projects that test their ability to work with societal insights and opportunities to frame and develop relevant and imaginative design responses. Outcomes of Product Design projects range from artefacts, services and systems, to interactions and experiences.

BDes Product Design prides itself on an established studio-based culture with focus upon individual students, small teaching groups, and socially-oriented projects. Our students work across myriad contexts, cultures and communities, addressing civic issues, the complexities of modern life and transdisciplinary creative collaboration.

MEDes Master of European Design (MEDes)
The MEDes is a five-year integrated Masters degree, and the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is part of a network of seven European institutions offering this programme which includes Aaalto University in Finland, KISD in Cologne, Politecnico di Milano in Italy, ENSCI in Paris, the University of Aveiro in Portugal and Konstfack in Sweden. This unique educational experience immerses MEDes students in different cultures, pedagogies and professional contexts, enabling them to develop strong international networks and a professional design practice capable of addressing social, ethical and environmental issues at local and planetary scales.

This study pathway extends GSA's transdisciplinary approach into an international education setting, with students spending two years studying Product Design at the GSA, before embarking on a subsequent two further years studying at two different European partner institutions. In Product Design Stage 2 students have the opportunity to study a language course at beginner or intermediate level to support their local cultural experiences on MEDes exchange as part of this degree's international outlook. Studying in GSA Product Design, and at two different partner institutions, exposes students to a diverse range of studio-based learning in which students will acquire a wide range of visualisation, communication and material-making skills that will enable them to bring together research insights and expert knowledge to drive the design and innovation process.

MEDes students return to the GSA Product Design programme for their fifth and final degree year allowing them to consolidate and apply their experiences to live, collaborative and self-defined final projects which combine both design practice and theoretical elements.

BDes and MEDes graduates emerge from the Product Design programme as confident critical thinkers and makers with a nuanced, future-facing perspective, prepared to creatively and considerately design for and within complex social, technological and ecological contexts. Our graduates are well placed to extend their study onto Masters of PhD, or enter employment through public sector organisations such as Scottish Government and the NHS, and through multi-scale private sector companies and consultancies such as Google, IDEO and Microsoft.

4. Programme Aims

The programme provides students with the opportunity to:

BDes

- Acquire the theoretical and practical design skills underpinning a personal design perspective, to operate successfully within a professional environment.
- Respond to emerging social, economic, technological and environmental challenges.
- Integrate social science approaches and research methods into product design practice.
- Demonstrate an informed, ethical, and critical position regarding design practice and their role within it
- Demonstrate an awareness of the global climate crisis through sustainable and regenerative design practice in the development of project outcomes
- Manifest their thinking as new, desirable, and challenging products, services, and experiences
- Develop theoretical and practical design skills underpinning a personal design perspective, to operate successfully in cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary professional environments

MEDes

- Acquire an individual design perspective in response to contemporary living and wider society through the exploration of a theme or topic of interest utilising theoretical and practical design skills and competences.
- Engage a range of academic, professional, and civic stakeholders in the research, development and design of a thematic body of work.
- Demonstrate confidence in the articulation, reflection, and evaluation of design practice, outcomes, and the thinking that underpins these.
- Achieve a coherent and professional level of production, communication, and presentation of a body of work.
- Articulate an intentional relationship between a written element, research, and designed outcomes.
- Work collaboratively towards the production of a compelling body of work in response to a collaborative design challenge.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

After full participation in and successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

BDes

- Apply a diversity of resources to formulate and respond to design challenges within an individual design practice.
- Demonstrate a research-led, user-focused approach to social, environmental and cultural issues through the application of design process and skills.
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the global climate crisis through sustainable and regenerative design practice in the development of design project outcomes.
- Develop and define a large-scale self-directed project that incorporates a research component that drives the design development of 'studio' practice-based outcomes (artefacts, services, or experiences).
- Communicate the value of such a design process to an audience of designers, professionals, and industry stakeholders.

MEDes

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of research methods to engage with diverse communities and stakeholders.
- Design and develop collaborative and participatory approach to the development of innovative future propositions.
- Demonstrate originality in the application of conceptual and semantic refinement to the resolution of a body of work derived from contextual and theoretical research of the chosen topic.
- Apply advanced principles of critical writing and discourse in the generation of a written thesis.
- Interpret, analyse and synthesise insights from social, contextual and theoretical research on a chosen topic, through the application of design practice
- Communicate and articulate an identifiable contribution to the creation of new knowledge and value through the delivery of a self-directed project.

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

The programme is designed as a studio-based learning programme which supports students in the development and acquisition of a range of skills. Through projects both individual and collaborative, students will engage with a range of activities (presentation, exhibition, performance, workshop) that will build towards a graduate profile that will scaffold their trajectory into future employment. Much of that experience will happen within the physicality of the studio through tutorials and reviews of project work with the teaching team, supported by Canvas for synchronous contact points, asynchronous online resources, guidance and information. Students will also engage with peer support through dialogue and peer feedback.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Assessment is undertaken through both formative and summative activity.
Formative assessment provides ongoing tutor and per feedback throughout and at interim points in a course. Formative assessment includes peer and tutor review of work towards the summative assessment of the course.

Summative assessment is an evaluation of student performance at the end of a course. Assessment methods refer to a portfolio of work that could include presentations, annotated portfolios, practice-based and written outputs.

All summative assessments are marked and graded in line with the GSA's Code of Assessment. Students are provided with assessment guidelines and briefings to support the assessment process.

8. Programme Structure

The BDes (Hons) and MEDes degree pathways share a common ''core'' in the first two years of study with all students studying the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Product Design curricula. Stage 2 is the point in which students choose the educational journey that best suits their academic objectives: either BDes or MEDes.

MEDes students spend the following two years studying in two different European Schools completing 120 credits in Stage 3 and 120 credits in Stage 4 before returning to GSA and finalise their degree in Stage 5. Students pursuing the MEDes path will study a foreign language in Stage 2 to support their integration and orientation into a new educational and social culture.

Stage 1 – BDes Product Design

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Design Studio – Foundations of Design Process and Practice	40	7	1	
Co-Lab	20	7	1	
Design Studio – Product Interactions	40	7	2	
Introduction to Critical Studies	20	7	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 2 –BDes Product Design

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Design Studio – Human-Centred Narratives	40	8	1	
S.I.T. Elective 2A	20	8	1	
Design Studio – Exploring Context	40	8	2	
S.I.T. Elective 2B or Languages (mandatory for MEDes)	20	8	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 3 – BDes Product Design / MEDes on exchange out

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Future Ecosystems	40	9	1	
S.I.T. Elective 3	20	9	1	
Exploring Design Identities	40	9	2	
Critical Writing	20	9	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 4 – BDes Product Design / MEDes on exchange out				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Creating Future Experiences	40	10	1	
PD Dissertation	20	10	1	
Developing Practice (Self-initiated)	60	10	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 5 – MEDes Product Design				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Creating Collaborative Futures	40	11	1	
Advancing Practice (Combined Practice and Thesis)	80	11	1 & 2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements

Outgoing BDes (Hons) Exchange Students

BDes (Hons) Product Design students may be able to undertake a period of exchange with one of our international partner institutions in Stage 3, their third year of study. Outgoing International exchanges will normally be for the duration of one Semester, either Semester 1 or Semester 2. All outgoing BDes (Hons) exchange students will be expected to achieve the equivalent of 60 SCQF/30 ECTS academic credits for one semester at their host institution.

BDes (Hons) Product Design students will apply for international exchange in their second year of study. To be eligible for consideration for international exchange the student will normally have achieved a minimum grade of C3 at the formative assessment stage of the studio course component in stage 2. Where a student has not achieved the specified level of attainment, the Programme Leader may review their application and exercise academic discretion.

Students who enter the programme directly into Stage 3 are not eligible to join the MEDes pathway and will follow the BDes Stage 3 and Stage 4 degree pathway.

Visiting Student Arrangements

Incoming visiting students on exchange may enter the programme as Study Abroad students in Stage 2 or as Exchange students in Stage 3. These exchanges are normally for the duration of one semester, during which students will follow the prescribed courses associated with the stage they join.

Support for Outgoing and Incoming Exchange Students

The Product Design Programme offers dedicated academic guidance and pastoral support to both outgoing and incoming exchange students.

Stage 2 Exchange and Visiting Student Courses				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Design Studio – Human Centred Narratives	40	8	1	
S.I.T. Elective 2A	20	8	1	
Design Studio – Exploring Context	40	8	2	

Stage 2 Exchange and Visiting Student Courses				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
S.I.T. Elective 2B	20	8	2	

Stage 3 Exchange and Visiting Student Courses				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Future Ecosystems	40	9	1	
S.I.T. Elective 3	20	9	1	
Exploring Design Identities	40	9	2	
Critical Writing	20	9	2	

10. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and Other External Reference Points

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. For further information relevant to this programme see:

QAA *Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design*.. Available from: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

11. Programme Regulations and Requirements for Progression

All GSA Degree programmes are validated by the University of Glasgow and the GSA's Programme Regulations are published in the University of Glasgow University Regulations.

These regulations include the requirements in relation to:

(a) Award of the degree
(b) Progression requirements
(c) Early exit awards

In referring to regulations for degree programmes, students should consult the University Regulations which were in force in the academic session in which they first registered for the degree programme in question.