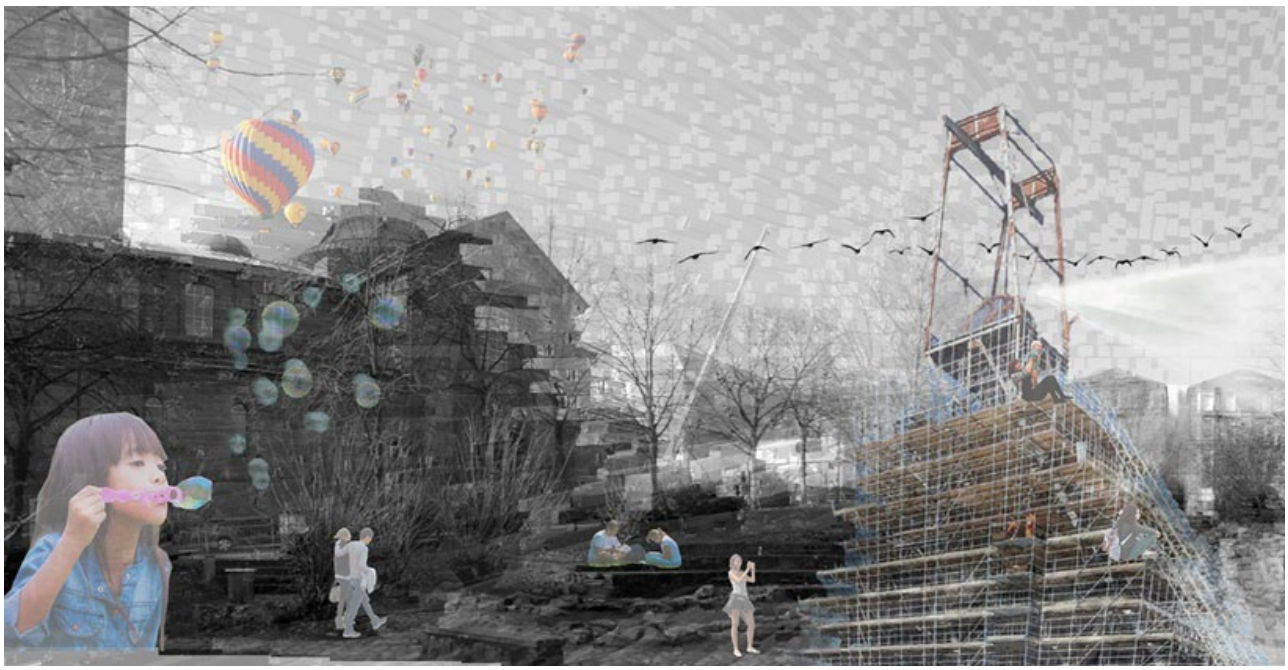
Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification
Programme Title:
Master of Architectural Studies in Creative Urban Practices
Master of Architectural Studies in Digital Creativity
Master of Architectural Studies in Energy and Environment
Master of Architectural Studies in History and Theory of the City
Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Buildings
Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Design



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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	Master of Architectural Studies in Creative Urban Practices Master of Architectural Studies in Digital Creativity Master of Architectural Studies in Energy and Environment Master of Architectural Studies in History and Theory of the City Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Buildings Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Design
School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Programme Leader	Isabel Deakin
Award to be Conferred	Master of Architectural Studies in Creative Urban Practices Master of Architectural Studies in Digital Creativity Master of Architectural Studies in Energy and Environment Master of Architectural Studies in History and Theory of the City Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Buildings Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Design
Exit Awards	PGT stage 1: Post Graduate Certificate in Architectural Studies PGT stage 2: Post Graduate Diploma in Architectural Studies
SCQF Level	11
Credits	180
Mode of Study	Full Time
HECOS Code	100122/100197/100782

Academic Session	2026-27
Date of Approval	Programme Approval October 2025

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

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	
A Levels	

Other	An undergraduate Degree with minimum First Class or Upper Second-Class Honours Degree, or the equivalent in a field relevant to the student's chosen specialist programme. Additional entry requirements: Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio of work, (except for History and Theory of the City programme, where two examples of academic writing and an outline of a research proposal should be submitted in lieu of a portfolio), along with satisfactory academic references and a personal statement as parts of their applications. Applicants may also be required to attend an interview as part of their admissions assessment. The choice of the specialist programme intended to be studied and a written rationale supporting the choice should form part of the personal statement.
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 6.5 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

The Master of Architectural Studies programme with six specialisms which lead to named awards, is aimed at graduates of architecture and allied disciplines who, following the completion of their professional education, wish to extend their knowledge and skills in undertaking further specialised study, either to develop existing professional and research interests or to move into new areas of practice.

A balance of independent inquiry and collaborative engagement is supported through both specialist and cross-specialist learning by students undertaking an independent research project within their chosen specialism and an elective study in an alternative specialism to broaden their knowledge within the field of architecture.

The structure of the programme promotes dialogue across specialisms through shared lectures, seminars, reviews and studio space with a shared course in Semester 2 providing opportunities for collaborative working.

Projects are typically rooted in Glasgow, which is used as a living laboratory for exploring architectural, social and environmental questions. Learning extends beyond the local through comparative international and global analysis, enabling students to test and contextualise their ideas within diverse cultural and geographic frameworks.

Uniquely positioned within a wider creative community of the Glasgow School of Art, the Programme offers students the opportunity to develop a distinctive and informed approach to architectural research and practice, while contributing to an environment of shared critical inquiry and innovation.

Students will select to specialise in one of the following areas:

Creative Urban Practices (CUP)

Digital Creativity

Energy and Environment

History and Theory of the City

Urban Buildings

Urban Design

Creative Urban Practices

In Creative Urban Practices students develop a critical understanding of the key theories and practices of space and place, in the context of historical and contemporary urbanism and art practice. Students begin by undertaking a set of exercises/spatial practices that help them to develop skills and practices for the understanding, analysis and representation of the nature of particular places in order to devise creative propositions that address the political, cultural and ecological dimensions of space and place in the city. Students are encouraged to work within the studio which is a discursive forum that encourages the speculative investigation of the links between theories and practices of space and place and the realities of contemporary urban design practice.

Digital Creativity

Digital Creativity students use scripting and the principle of algorithmic architecture to enhance design 'creativity'. This specialism offers students new working methods, in addition to drawing and model making, to explore architectural design problems within a creativity framework. The teaching, inspired and stimulated by ideas from the SmartGeometry (SG) group, explores the potential of scripting and algorithms to offer a new way of designing and thinking about the design process. Computer algorithms and scripting provide architects with the opportunities to design in a nonlinear way. This is a notion of understanding nature's evolutionary and nonlinear processes and learning from them rather than mimicking them. Algorithmic processes in design have a tendency towards variation and deviation from a condition of stability, regularity and constancy; variation and deviation are at the very essence of our biological evolution. Students also explore areas of problem solving, mental structures, cognition, simulation, and rule-based intelligence.

Energy and Environment

The context for this specialism is the increasing requirements for low energy, low carbon, and sustainable buildings; and the rapid changes in legislation, technology, and systems. Within Energy and Environment, both domestic and non-domestic buildings and the wider built environment are investigated. Content provides insight into the processes and knowledge that informs and shapes how buildings are designed to meet contemporary targets for low energy, low carbon, healthy and comfortable environments, and usability. The teaching balances theory, design practice, and innovation; and content is closely linked with industry developments, but with a theoretical

underpinning and willingness to experiment. Students gain skills and insight to undertake evidence-based design of buildings that can meet environmental, societal and occupant needs.

History and Theory of the City

This specialist study is designed to provide an understanding of the reasons for the forms of our cities, and of the theories that have been developed to explain them. Drawing from architectural history and theory as well as sociology, cultural studies, and urban planning, the teaching takes a broad range of approaches to the historical and theoretical study of the urban built environment. Through case studies and first-hand experiences, students will develop the skills to devise and carry out research on the history and theory of the urban form. The focus is in two parts, firstly exploring the past and present conceptions of space and how they influenced the formation of cities in their architectural, political and social contexts. Secondly students explore various research methods for developing new knowledge about city form, including visual analysis, bibliographic and archive research, and working with maps. Content covers major themes in the history and theory of urban architecture, which may include power and its architectural representation in urban institutions, the roles of religious and memorial architecture in forming social identities, and environmental history of the city.

Urban Buildings

Students studying Urban Buildings are involved in the study and exploration of the reciprocal relationships which exist – as well as those which might yet be established – between the landscape, architecture and morphology of the city with Glasgow as the context. A framework for discussion is the over-arching themes of *type, technique and topography***.** Type in architecture suggests that history offers us related forms which can be grouped and might undergo a process of transformation by the designer for a contemporary situation. Technique is concerned with construction and the specific *expression* given to structural and environmental conditions of the architecture. Consideration of topography literally *grounds* a design and is a vital fact connecting a building with its unique location. Students are provided with the opportunity to explore through design using Glasgow as its laboratory.

Urban Design

Students studying Urban Design are involved in the creative exploration of the complex interrelationships between urban form and the daily activities of citizens in designing settings for joyful urban life – with Glasgow as a location rich for student investigations. The theory of Urban Morphology (Kropf, Moudon, Tarbett) provides students with a consistent approach to the description of urban form and associated open spaces. The study of Urban Design regards the masterplan – for new streets, open spaces, neighbourhoods and districts of the future - as an artistic creation, with its more or less detailed design prescriptions or 'urban rules'. The masterplan orchestrates subsequent design of individual buildings and open spaces by others. The teaching balances theoretical and practical knowledge in Urban Design.

Programme structure

Through a systematic and disciplined teaching methodology and through rigorous research and investigation methods, we encourage our students to communicate through their individual research project an architectural response to the challenges facing the contemporary world. The programme promotes and develops the importance of self-directed learning through design and over the year students progress through 3 stages of the design process:

- Preliminary design process – supporting the identification of a student's research interest and testing this through a series of architectural responses

- Intermediate design process – supporting the refinement of a student's research interest and development of a specific architectural response in context
- Advanced design process – supporting students to develop, deliver and communicate the outcomes of their research through a specific response relevant to their specialism

Alongside this, the cross-disciplinary context is provided through study in an elective in an alternative specialism, where a shared core of lectures and seminars in respective specialisms are provided that together give an overview of contemporary issues in and around architecture. All learning is delivered through a framework of six learning domains: Professionalism, Design/Create, Research, Communication, Skills, and Knowledge and all work is assessed against the individual course Intended Learning Outcomes.

The studio environment provides a forum for critical discussion, peer learning and support, where inclusivity is fostered through a mutually respectful, supportive and collaborative studio culture. Diverse teaching and learning methods encourage students to be curious, confident and above all independent in developing their personal responses to architecture and the environment.

On completion of the programme, the primary aim is that graduates are engaged citizens, critical thinkers, skilled communicators, inclusive and creative collaborators and life-long learners.

Graduates of the programme use these skills and knowledge in two distinct ways. Whilst the majority use the opportunity of enhanced employability to re-enter architecture and allied professional paths, either in the UK or abroad, a growing proportion choose to pursue an area of research through one of the MSA specialist research areas at a doctoral level of study.

4. Programme Aims

The aims of the Programme are to enable students to:

- Utilise and evaluate knowledge within their areas of specialist study to produce considered responses to architectural problems whilst questioning and enhancing the creative role of architecture to respond to the ethical and environmental challenges of the 21st Century.
- Become creative self-reflective thinkers whose architectural practice is centred on inclusive, ethical and collaborative processes that are evident and explicit in their self-directed decision making and outputs.
- Develop rigorous research methodologies, research processes and systematic investigation to support complex architectural outputs.
- Communicate complex architectural ideas through different media to a range of audiences in a variety of different settings.
- Develop advanced architectural thinking, communication and design skills using iterative design processes as evidenced through self-directed creative proposals.
- Evidence a systematic understanding of specialist knowledge, and a critical awareness of the current problems and provide new insights within their area of specialist study in relation to architectural practice.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

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

Professionalism: knowledge of climate strategies, ethical and inclusive practices to produce considered responses to the architectural problems encountered within subject specialisms in the discipline of architecture

Design/ Create: a rigorous methodological approach, utilising creativity, iterative testing and ethical evaluation to produce self-defined architectural responses within subject specialisms at a master's level

Research: research skills to synthesise responses appropriate to problems set within the specialist subjects of architecture

Communication: the use and integration of analogue and digital media to visually and verbally communicate appropriate responses to problems set within the specialist subjects of architecture

S**kills:** analytical skills and critical reflections to produce digital and manual artefacts to explore appropriate responses to problems within the specialist subjects of architecture

Knowledge: knowledge creatively both individually and with peers to address the social and ethical challenges and the issue of climate change to speculate about the future of architecture within subject specialisms

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

MSA offers a comprehensive and innovative learning experience that combines the richness of traditional studio-based architectural education supported by digital software developments and online delivery methods. The programme content and delivery provide students with a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own specialism.

While curriculum delivery is predominantly in-person, online delivery methods supplement in-person delivery.Students have access to digital software and tools commonly used in contemporary architecture, including 3D modelling, visualization software, and other digital platforms that facilitate innovative design processes and foster creativity.

A balance of independent inquiry and collaborative engagement is supported through both specialist and cross-specialist learning by students undertaking an independent research project within their chosen specialism and an elective study in an alternative specialism to broaden their knowledge within the field of architecture.

The collaborative course in Semester 2 with peers and the Post Graduate Elective in Semester 2 working with students from other disciplines, both in-person and virtually, foster strong teamwork and communication skills essential for successful architectural practice in today's interconnected world.

Design tutorials are offered in a range of groups sizes down to one-to-one tutorials between students and studio tutor. Group tutorials encourage peer-to-peer learning through the exchange of ideas and critical engagement with the work of others. Cross-disciplinary Design Forums are generally arranged at the mid and endpoint of studio projects to encourage discussions around the design issues raised by the studio project.

Lectures and seminars are delivered through each specialism to the whole cohort, offering students the opportunity to broaden their architectural knowledge and understanding coupled with analytical and critical thinking skills.

Field trips are an essential aspect of the learning experience connecting student projects with real world situations, grounding students design propositions in places and communities with specific environmental issues.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Assessment is undertaken through both formative and summative tasks. Formative assessment offers students the opportunity to obtain ongoing staff and peer feedback through discussion and review throughout the course. As such the Formative assessment process provided during the course supports the Summative assessment process which is generally undertaken at the end of the course.

Summative assessment is designed to support student learning. Students' work is assessed against the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each course.. Summative assessment is undertaken through coursework assignments and/or formal written examinations. Coursework involves visual and text-based submissions in both digital and physical formats including design portfolios, technical studies and written essays. All summative assessment and feedback are provided using assessment rubrics and in relation to GSA's Code of Assessment.

During the academic session staff deliver assessment workshops with students clarifying the assessment processes applied within the Programme.

8.Programme Structure

Stage 1

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Independent Research Project - Preliminary	20	11	1	
Elective Research Paper	20	11	1	
Core Research Methods: Research Primer for Architects	20	11	1	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

Stage 2

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Independent Research Project- Intermediate	20	11	2	
Project in the City	20	11	2	
Post Graduate Elective	20	11	2	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

Stage 3

Students complete 1 of the following courses that aligns with their chosen specialism

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Independent Research Project- Advanced in Creative Urban Practices	60	11	3	
Independent Research Project- Advanced in Digital Creativity	60	11	3	
Independent Research Project-	60	11	3	

Stage 3				
Students complete 1 of the following courses that aligns with their chosen specialism				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Advanced in Energy and Environment				
Independent Research Project-Advanced in History and Theory of the City	60	11	3	
Independent Research Project-Advanced in Urban Buildings	60	11	3	
Independent Research Project-Advanced in Urban Design	60	11	3	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements

N/A

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:

The QAA statement regarding master's level education available at the following link:
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/master's-degree-characteristics-statement.pdf

The Level 11 Descriptors provided by the SCQF governing attainment during master's level study, available at:
https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/SCQF-LevelDescriptors.pdf

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.