



PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH FOR THE CREATIVE DISCIPLINES

STUDENT GUIDE SUMMER 2026

This Student Guide provides you with detailed information about the Pre-sessional English for the Creative Disciplines at the Glasgow School of Art. Read it carefully to learn what to expect from the course in terms of the content, teaching and learning methods and assessments.

PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH FOR CREATIVE DISCIPLINES (PS ECD)

Option 1: ON-CAMPUS (BLENDED)

Option 2: ONLINE

Student Guide Summer 2026

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What is the GSA Pre-Sessional in English for Creative Disciplines course?

The GSA Pre-Sessional in English for Creative Disciplines (PS ECD) is a flexible discipline- specific language and study skills programme. The course is tailored to the needs of international students who have been offered a place on an undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate (PG) course at GSA, but who have not yet achieved the English level required by the GSA programme. Achieving the required grades at the end of the PS ECD course allows the students to progress onto their GSA programme without having to retake the required language test, such as IELTS.

The course is made up of three independent modules, each built around a particular theme:

- Module 1: Objects
- Module 2: Sensory experiences
- Module 3: Sustainable practices and processes

The themes are sufficiently general to allow every student, regardless of their discipline, to engage with it and apply the learning later, on their UG or PG course, as evidenced by the feedback from the previous PS ECD students. The first module lasts four weeks while modules 2 and 3 are five weeks each. Each module is progressively more challenging than the previous one, both linguistically and conceptually.

In summer 2026, the PS ECD course will be delivered in two different formats: on-campus with blended elements (option 1) and fully online (option 2).

- **Option 1 ON-CAMPUS WITH ONLINE ELEMENTS (BLENDED):** The course combines elements of online and in-person delivery. Module 1 runs fully online. Since the majority of the PSE students are usually from China, each study day will start with a 4-5 hour period of self-study during which students are asked to do individual and collaborative tasks. The day finishes with a real-time online session which lasts around 2 hours.

Modules 2 and 3 will take place on the GSA campus in Glasgow and will follow a similar flipped-classroom approach. Each day starts with a short online session explaining the tasks for the day, followed by a 2-3 hour self-study period and then a more hands-on workshop session with the teacher delivered in person.

- **Option 2 FULLY ONLINE:** The course runs fully online from start to finish, following the model of learning and teaching for Module 1 described above.

Please note that there is no difference in materials and activities used the courses, or the amount of real-time teaching time. Students can join the PS ECD course at any stage, as long as they meet the entry language requirements of the module and complete a preparatory online induction (see the PS ECD Language Requirements document for details). Please note different types of language tests are accepted for the on-campus and fully online courses.

Why should I take the PS ECD course?

The PS ECD offers a unique opportunity to study English and essential academic skills in the context of the creative disciplines (Art, Design and Architecture), their specialist learning methodologies, and practices and processes, enriched by discussion of the contemporary art, design and culture in UK, Scotland and worldwide. Based on this mix of language with subject content and studio practice, the PS ECD course helps students to develop discipline-specific practices, which should make the transition to the main programmes of study easier.



The PS ECD course offers the following advantages:

- Integrated individual and group projects combining language and studio practice to allow the development of relevant research skills, creative and critical thinking, content knowledge, and professional attributes
- Interactive, enquiry-based and student-centred teaching methods which match those used on the GSA's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes
- Integrated formative assessment to allow tutors to monitor progress and establish personalised learning objectives through one-to-one and small group tutorials with language and studio tutors
- Cultural immersion in the form of virtual and in-person gallery visits, film screenings, artist talks, and

lectures from subject specialists

- Learning in small groups with guidance from experienced and qualified language and art and design tutors, who are also art and design practitioners
- An induction to the GSA's facilities and services, including Library, Archives and Collections, and Studios
- Learning technologies to facilitate learning and teaching, individual and collaborative work, and to help students to develop the necessary digital literacies

What can I expect to gain from the course?

Overall, students can expect to improve their performance across the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), as well as subskills in the context of creative disciplines. Students will progress within the 'Independent' category of the CEFR framework, from upper B1 to upper B2 (an equivalent of 5.5 – 6.5 range of IELTS). The main features of this transition will be increased engagement with language at the level of detail, complexity, familiarity and abstraction of the topic.



By completing the PS ECD course, students can expect to:

- Communicate more effectively and confidently in English in the context of critical art and design education, both in writing and speaking
- Improve their comprehension when listening to lectures, talks and discussions in the context of the creative disciplines, and develop relevant strategies to cope with increasingly more challenging and complex lectures and talks
- Improve their reading comprehension and develop relevant strategies to be able to cope with a range of disciplinary texts of varying degrees of complexity and length, to locate significant and relevant

information, and to identify the author's stance and discern between facts and opinions

- Learn how to identify and evaluate pieces of information from a range of spoken and written sources in terms of their relevance to your own spoken and written work
- Develop the necessary note-taking skills while listening and reading in order to use the notes effectively during presentations, seminar discussions and conversations, and in writing
- Develop the necessary skills in referencing and citing in order to appropriately integrate source material in your own work to develop a logical and coherent argument
- Demonstrate a better understanding of written genres typical of the creative disciplines, such as an essay, supporting statement, reflective account, visual analysis, and an ability to produce them
- Develop greater autonomy and independence as a learner in a creative learning environment, and develop a range of higher-order thinking skills (e.g. critical and analytical skills, reflection, evaluation) and personal attributes (e.g. cross-cultural communication, creative thinking, collaboration, ethical awareness, adaptability, resourcefulness) in order to succeed at the GSA

On top of that, the student can expect to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the creative and cultural practices with a specific focus on the context of arts education within Scotland and the UK. This will be mainly achieved through the studio practice integrated into the PS ECD course syllabus.

We also hope that the course will help the students to get familiar with some of the GSA facilities and services such as the Library and the Learning Support, as well as learning technologies used at the GSA so that students are able to settle in quickly when they start their GSA study programme in the academic year 2026/27.

How does the course work?

The overall approach relies on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which is learning English by studying a content-based subject, in this case Art, Design and Architecture.

Therefore, the course design features three interconnected subject-specific strands:

- Art and design/culture studies concepts, e.g. sustainability
- Art and design methodologies, e.g. primary investigation
- Art and design projects, e.g. sensory experience

The first two strands focus on the presentation and exploration of the topics and relevant illustrative examples of artworks through lectures, talks, film screenings, text readings, as well as student-led discussions and presentations. The third 'project' strand is a more practice-oriented component which will ask the students to work individually and/or in small groups to produce a textual/visual/material artefact or a series thereof. This will be subject to formative feedback, including group critiques and a critical response process (an artist-driven feedback process during which the author presents their piece together with probing questions for the audience in order to self-evaluate their work). The 'Project' strand will also allow the students to research what an artist's or designer's practice entails, interrogate their own practice, beliefs and values, and experiment with research/creation processes as well as collaborate in groups. Last but not least, the projects within this strand feed directly into language outputs – see the section below for details.



All three strands will strongly rely on enquiry-based learning, which emphasises the need for consistent questioning, problem posing and solving, divergent and convergent thinking, multi-perspective evaluation and group knowledge construction. This particular approach is typical of critical art and design education that the GSA prides itself on.

All three strands will also integrate an appropriate and relevant language and study skills focus to help the students process the input adequately, develop relevant study and language skills and relevant coping strategies, and produce work that demonstrates their ability to use these skills in context. For example, a lecture may be accompanied by a terminology task and a follow-up discussion.

On top of that, regular language and study skills workshops will be timetabled weekly to analyse the features of the written and spoken texts in more detail, and to practise a range of language skills and subskills in more controlled activities to help the students make progress in order to achieve the required exit grades.

Throughout the course, regular one-to-one consultations will be offered during which the students will be able to keep track of their development in terms of short- and longer-term goals related to language study and study skills.

A staggered approach to timetabling the language workshops will be taken, with the proportion of the language input being front-loaded and gradually decreasing to make more space for the content input and practice through the project component (with language still being part thereof, in line with CLIL principles). The Project component itself will become progressively more challenging in terms of the complexity of the input and output. In other words, proportionately Module 1 will include more language input than Module 2 or Module 3. For that reason, the language expectations during subsequent modules will be higher. For example, during Module 1, the students will focus on developing writing at the paragraph level while during Module 2 they will be asked to write longer pieces with references to source material. This means a student joining the PS ECD course for Module 2 needs to be able to write well-structured, coherent and developed paragraphs in English.

What could a sample week of study on the PS ECD course look like?

The PS ECD is a full-time course with around 35 hours of study time per week (more around assessment times). This includes class contact and self-study. The course is organised this way so that most of the self-study has to be completed before the class with the teacher. The amount of self-study every day may vary between 4 and 5 hours while the live class usually takes around 1.5-2.5 hours. You are also required to remain in regular contact with your peers and the self-study materials will often ask you to work together. Around assessment times, the required number of hours may increase. In Module 1 all the learning and teaching will take place online. In Modules 2 and 3, if students choose option 1, the individual and collaborative study can be done online or in-person while the class with the teacher will take place in-person. Alternatively, everything will take place online if the student has opted for the fully online format of the course.

Each day starts with self-study materials comprising videos, documents and worksheets, which focus on particular skills and an aspect of the Module theme and ask students to work on their own or with a partner to complete the tasks, discuss, and prepare short presentations or pieces of writing. This is followed by a real-time class with a teacher during which there is time for questions and answers. The idea is that the class is

student-driven and there is an expectation that the students are active participants. It is a workshop/seminar rather than a lecture.

However, each week there are:

- Study skills activities to develop and practise the academic language skills
- Language activities to help to improve accuracy and a range of grammar and vocabulary
- Content input, mostly in form of interactive lectures provided by guest speakers
- Studio input and practice led by experienced art tutors



Please note there is no coursebook. Instead, the course uses authentic texts and lectures and bespoke materials created to help the students engage with the reading and listening. The materials are released daily via the course online learning platform, Canvas. We do not provide the materials in printed form and many activities are completed using online tools like collaborative documents or platforms. This means laptops or tablets will be used during classes. Students can of course print the materials if they wish so.

How are students assessed?

Students will only be assessed on the development of their language and study skills. While the Studio component is not assessed, it gives the basis for the linguistic/academic assessment and indirectly feeds into it. In other words, all the assessed written and spoken language work relies on the Studio projects.

The table below demonstrates how the studio and language components are linked in terms of assessment:

	STUDIO PROJECT	ASSESSED LANGUAGE COMPONENT	
		Written output	Spoken output
Module 1 - OBJECTS	A material response to an object from GSA Archives. Students work in pairs or groups of three.	An individual visual and contextual analysis of the two objects.	Pair/group presentations of the object made in response to the studio brief ('artist talk') plus a group critique. An individual reflection on the project via video.
Module 2 – SENSORY EXPERIENCES	Designing a sensory experience around a city/home environment. Students work in small groups. Each 'experience' is tested by another group. There is a possibility of external guests trying out the 'experiences' too.	A short supporting statement for the experience design explaining the rationale and the design process – written in groups. A longer reflective account – written individually.	Group presentations discussing the design process, including the peer feedback from the 'experience' testers plus a group critique. An individual reflection on the project via video.
Module 3 – SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND PROCESSES	Designing a series of artworks, products or Services in response to the sustainability brief. Students work in small groups.	An individually written assignment providing a critical and reflective discussion of sustainable practices and processes within the student's specialism based on literature and research.	A seminar discussion/presentation on sustainability based on the background reading. Group presentations of the studio projects plus a group critique. An individual reflection on the project via video.

Each module relies on formative/continuous assessment ('coursework' and 'class engagement') via individual and collaborative tasks and participation in the live classes. Students are expected to maintain a language portfolio to document their learning journey, through which formative feedback will be provided. There will be 'summative' tasks for each skill toward the end of each module. The tasks will usually take form of integrated assessment tasks, for instance:

- 'Listen to speak/write' task
- 'Read to speak/write' task

- Two interconnected speaking tasks, e.g. presentation/seminar discussion, to demonstrate the student's ability to respond to feedback
- Two interconnected writing tasks, e.g. single artwork visual analysis and a compare-and-contrast analysis of two artworks, to demonstrate the student's ability to respond to feedback



In the first two modules, the tasks are referred to as 'summative' because even though there will be an expectation of progress over the duration of the block, not reaching the expected module exit grades will not prevent the student from progressing to the next stage of the course. For this reason, at the end of the first and second module, the student will receive a progress report stating what stage they are at in a descriptive way e.g.: 'well on track', 'making progress', 'needs to work'.

The third module will follow a similar arrangement, i.e. there will be formative and summative tasks as above; however, this time the students will receive grades (using an IELTS-like grading system). Each of the language skills will be given equal weighting of 25%.

To help the students develop their portfolio of coursework, formative feedback events will be held regularly throughout the course, including group critiques and self-evaluations structured around the idea of the critical response process, as well as individual consultations with the tutor.

Practical information about the PS ECD course

Application process

You can find the application form here:

https://glasgowschoolofart.padlet.org/aniarolinska/presessional_course

To apply for the PS ECD course, students must have a conditional offer for any GSA course which requires them to improve their language skills up to a level required by the prospective course. These requirements will be different for undergraduate and postgraduate courses and so they affect the entry requirements for the PS ECD Course; check the programme website for details. Students also need a UKVI approved English test, such as IELTS UKVI, TOEFL ibt, or Pearson PTE Academic UKVI, taken within 2 years of the proposed course start date.

Depending on the student's current English language scores and the GSA UG/PG programme, the student can join the PS ECD course at three intake points to undertake all three modules (14 weeks), Modules 2 and 3 (10 weeks), or only Module 3 (5 weeks).

Entry requirements

Main course English language requirement	Pre-Sessional English course language requirement	Course we recommend
IELTS 6.5 overall with no individual skill lower than 6.0	At least 5.5 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.0	14-week course (Modules 1, 2, 3)
	At least 6.0 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.0 All other skills must be 5.5 or higher	10-week course (Modules 2, 3)
	At least 6.5 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.5 All other skills must be 6.0 or higher	5-week course (Module 3)
IELTS 6.5 overall with no individual skill lower than 5.5	At least 6.0 overall. No individual skill lower than 5.0	14-week course (Modules 1, 2, 3)
	At least 6.0 overall No individual skill lower than 5.5	10-week course (Modules 2, 3)
	At least 6.5 overall Only one skill at 5.5 and no other skill lower than that	5-week course (Module 3)
IELTS 6.0 overall with no individual skill lower than 5.5	At least 5.5 overall No individual skills lower than 5.0	14-week course (Modules 1, 2, 3)
	At least 5.5 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.0 All other skills must be 5.5 or higher	10-week course (Modules 2, 3)
	At least 6.0 overall	5-week course

Maximum of one skill at 5.0 All other skills must be 5.5 or higher	(Module 3)
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Course calendar

Please note there are induction activities scheduled before the course starts and it is highly recommended that the student attends those activities. Its purpose is to allow the student to get to know the course processes, technologies, ask questions, and also to meet the teachers and other students.

	Application deadline	Compulsory induction activities	Classes start	Course end
14 weeks: Modules 1, 2, 3	4 May 2026	Online induction for students: 14 May and 15 May (2hrs in the morning BST time)	18 May 2026	Teaching ends on 28 Aug 2026 Results are published on 31 Aug 2026
No classes 15-19 June 2026 to allow the students doing the on-campus option to travel to the UK – please note there is an induction on campus so plan your flights accordingly				
10 weeks: Modules 2, 3 Blended/On campus	1 June 2026	In-person induction for on-campus students: 19 June	22 June 2026	
10 weeks: Modules 2, 3 Online	1 June 2026	Online induction for new online students: 18 June (2hrs in the morning BST time) Online induction for all online students: 19 June (2hrs in the morning BST time)	22 June 2026	
There is no break between module 2 and module 3.				
5 weeks: Module 3 Blended/On campus	6 July 2026	In-person induction for on-campus students: 24 July	27 July 2026	
5 weeks: Module 3 Online	6 July 2026	Online induction for new online students: 23 July (2hrs in the morning BST time) Online induction for all online students: 24 July (2hrs in the morning BST time)	27 July 2026	

*depends if the majority of the students have arrived on campus

Course fees

- 14 weeks: £7,160
- 10 weeks: £5,320
- 5 weeks: £2,720

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Any enquiries can be made to pre-sessional@gsa.ac.uk Please note that while we endeavour to respond to your queries as quickly as we can, it may take up to 3 working days to do so.

You can also find further information, along with the application form here:

https://glasgowschoolofart.padlet.org/aniarolinska/presessional_course