

Common Academic Framework for Taught Degree Programmes

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1. Introduction

1. The Glasgow School of Art is an accredited institution of the University of Glasgow, which has validated its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes since 1992.
2. The University of Glasgow recognises The Glasgow School of Art, through its Academic Council, as being responsible for the administration and development of the GSA programme and courses leading to University of Glasgow awards.
3. A summary of degrees awarded by the University of Glasgow in conjunction with The Glasgow School of Art is listed in Appendix 1.
4. The Glasgow School of Art's taught degree programmes are credit based and aligned to the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#) and [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).
5. The design of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes is underpinned by [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#) and, where relevant, the requirements of professional or statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

1.1 Scope

6. The Glasgow School of Art Common Academic Framework for Taught Degree Programmes sets out requirements for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes at The Glasgow School of Art.
7. The framework is designed to:
 - a. Set out the principles for the design of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes.
 - b. Establish a shared understanding of academic terminologies, internal and external regulations, and frameworks that underpin GSA academic programmes.
 - c. Ensure consistency of student experience through the design of programmes and courses.
 - d. Provide a framework and guidance for the design and development of new programmes and courses, and encourage ongoing enhancement of existing programmes and courses.
8. Exceptions to the GSA Common Academic Framework for individual programmes may be sought by the relevant School (see section 6).

1.2 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

9. Quality assurance and quality enhancement are the processes, structures and policies by which GSA assure ourselves, our students, and our stakeholders, that we are maintaining and developing academic standards and quality of provision.
10. GSA has comprehensive quality assurance and quality enhancement processes in place to ensure and safeguard the quality of educational provision, the academic standards of programmes and courses, and the student learning experience.

11. The Glasgow School of Art Common Academic Framework should be read with reference to related GSA Academic policies, including the following:

- [Programme Approval \(Validation\) Policy](#)
- [Periodic Review and Revalidation Policy](#)
- [Code of Assessment](#)
- [Programme Regulations](#)

1.3 Assessment

12. The assessment of all Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes is governed by [The Glasgow School of Art Code of Assessment](#).

13. The Code of Assessment sets out GSA's expectations as to the quality of assessment and feedback practices and the processes by which assurance of quality and standards is monitored and maintained.

2. The Glasgow School of Art Graduate Skills and Attributes

14. The Glasgow School of Art is committed to providing the highest quality learning experience to support students' creative, academic, intellectual and personal development.

15. Through our curriculum and engagement in our community, students have the opportunity to develop creative and academic knowledge and skills and personal skills and attributes. These equip students for creative lives, to successfully gain employment and self-employment, and to enable them to make positive contributions to culture, community and society.

16. GSA graduates are:

Creative Learners They are agile and creative life-long learners.

They anticipate, understand and manage change and demonstrate motivation, resourcefulness and resilience, effectively dealing with new challenges and unfamiliar contexts.

They are self-aware, recognise their strengths, and can determine priorities and strategies for professional development and personal growth.

Creative Thinkers They are imaginative and creative thinkers.

They use their curiosity and knowledge to explore issues and ideas in innovative, ethically-informed and entrepreneurial ways.

They synthesise critical analysis, evaluation and reflection to problem-solve and develop meaningful and sustainable responses to personal, cultural, and societal issues.

Creative Practitioners

They are skilled and creative practitioners.

They understand that speculation, thinking through making, uncertainty and persistence underpin creativity and the realisation of ideas.

They select and experiment with materials, processes, technologies and environments to make and present work that impacts society and expands disciplines.

Creative Collaborators

They are inclusive and creative collaborators.

They work with people and communities to plan and lead projects and demonstrate leadership through recognising the strengths and values of others, taking on responsibilities, and positively contributing to teamwork.

They network and build connections in open, authentic, and purposeful ways and know that respect for self and others is essential to develop trusting, supportive and collaborative relationships.

Creative Communicators

They are confident and creative communicators.

They are storytellers, able to articulate and exchange ideas and concepts professionally in visual, written and digital ways, adapting to context and audience.

They ask questions, value diverse perspectives and feedback, and make progress through active listening, negotiation and personal accountability.

Creative Citizens

They are responsible and creative citizens who care for people and the planet.

They have a global outlook and know how their creative skills and attitudes are critical to addressing the climate and sustainability crisis.

They break down barriers to create a fair and equitable society and drive change towards developing a social, environmental and economically responsible future.

3. Generic Composition of Programmes

17. All Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes will adopt a common vocabulary in Programme and Course specifications and associated student-facing programme and course information. A glossary of common terms is provided in Appendix 2.

18. All taught GSA Programmes and Courses are credit rated.

19. All GSA Programmes are composed of Courses that together make up the total learning of a Programme. Programmes are characterised by credits, levels, stages and intended learning outcomes.

3.1 Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

20. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are concise statements of what a student is expected to be able to demonstrate following successful completion of a programme.
21. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are aligned to [SCQF Level Descriptors](#), address relevant [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#) and, where relevant, the requirements of professional or statutory bodies (PSRBs).

3.2 Credits

22. Credits within GSA Programmes are listed as [SCQF credits](#) and follow the principle that 1 credit = 10 notional learning hours.
23. Credits are awarded and accumulated, following assessment and confirmation of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes associated with a particular course and stages of study.
24. Where academic credit is awarded by The Glasgow School of Art, this will be on the basis of 2 SCQF credits = 1 ECTS
Note: the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) is a system used across Europe for the transfer and accumulation of academic credit.

3.3 Levels

25. Levels within Programmes align to [SCQF Levels](#). As per the SCQF Framework, levels indicate the depth and difficulty of learning.

3.4 Stages

26. Stages within Programmes are set at a specific level of study and designated total amount of credit.
- Undergraduate Programme Stages will be termed 1, 2, 3 & 4 and be aligned to SCQF levels 7 - 10.
 - Stages in Programmes with Diplomas and Integrated Masters will be termed 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 and be aligned to SCQF levels 7 - 11.
 - Taught Postgraduate Programme Stages will be termed 1, 2 & 3 and be aligned to SCQF level 11.
27. Programme regulations outline minimum threshold progression requirements students must satisfy in order to progress to the next stage of a programme.
28. The achievement of progression requirements is evidenced through the graded outcomes of all courses within a designated Programme stage and confirmed at the relevant Exam Board.
29. Programmes Specifications detail Degree awards and possible early exit awards aligned to stages within a Programme. The requirements for awards are detailed in the associated programme regulations.

3.5 Academic Session

30. The academic session runs over three semesters from September to September.
31. In full-time mode the:
- Undergraduate academic session = 2 semesters (1200 notional learning hours)
 - 1 year Taught Postgraduate academic session = 3 semesters (1800 notional learning hours)
 - 2 year Taught Postgraduate academic session = 2 semesters (1200 notional learning hours)

3.6 Semesters

32. Semesters are normally 15 weeks in duration. Each semester will comprise:
- 10 weeks dedicated to teaching core curriculum
 - 1 non-taught week for independent study and personal and professional development
 - 1 week preparation for assessment
 - 3 weeks dedicated assessment period in which assessment and feedback are scheduled. Taught elements will not be precluded in this period, and appropriate flexibility will be offered to meet individual programme curriculum requirements.

3.7 Modes of Study

33. Modes of study include full-time and part-time.

3.8 Duration of Study

34. The minimum and maximum periods of study for the award of a GSA Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Degree are detailed in the relevant [Programme regulations](#).

3.9 Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Course Arrangements

35. All Programme Specifications will detail Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student course arrangements, including stages, courses, credit values, levels and semesters.

3.10 Generic Programme Structures

36. The following table provides a generic overview of the Undergraduate Programme structure.

Table 1. GSA Undergraduate Programme Structure

Stage	Credits and SCQF Levels	Semester 1	Semester 2	Notional Learning Hours
4	120 credits at SCQF 10	120 Credits		1200
3	120 credits at SCQF 9	60 Credits	60 Credits	1200
2	120 credits at SCQF 8	60 Credits	60 Credits	1200
1	120 credits at SCQF 7	60 Credits	60 Credits	1200

37. All Undergraduate programmes share a 20 credit course delivered at a common time in Stage 1.
38. Stage 5 in Undergraduate Programmes and Integrated Masters will offer 120 credits at SCQF 11 deliverable across Semester 1 and 2.

39. The following tables provide a generic overview of Taught Postgraduate Programme structures.

Table 2. GSA 1 Year Taught Postgraduate Degree Programme Structure

Stage	Credits and SCQF Levels	Semester	Notional Learning Hours
3	60 credits at Level SCQF 11	3	600
2	60 credits at Level SCQF 11	2	600
1	60 credits at Level SCQF 11	1	600

Table 3. GSA 2 Year Taught Postgraduate Degree Programme Structure

Year	Stage	Credits and SCQF Levels	Semester	Notional Learning Hours
2	3	120 credits at Level SCQF 11	1&2	1200
1	2	60 credits at Level SCQF 11	2	600
1	1	60 credits at Level SCQF 11	1	600

40. All taught Postgraduate programmes offer a 20 credit Core Research Methods course in Stage 1 and 20 credit elective courses in stage 2.

4. Generic Composition of Courses

41. Programmes are composed of courses taught across stages, which collectively support students to achieve programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

42. Courses are characterised by credits, levels, stages, course intended learning outcomes and assessment.

4.1 Credits

43. The minimum credit value of courses allowed for:

- Undergraduate Programmes = 10 credits (100 hours)
- Taught Postgraduate Programmes = 20 credits (200 hours)

44. Other course credit values allowed in Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate degree programmes are indicated in the relevant tables in section 4.6.

4.2 Levels

45. Courses have one determined SCQF level and are aligned to specific Programme stages.

4.3 Stages

46. Course delivery must start and be completed within the determined stage detailed in the relevant Course and Programme Specification.

4.4 Course Intended Learning Outcomes

47. Course Intended Learning Outcomes are aligned to designated SCQF levels and map to Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.

48. Course Intended Learning Outcomes are concise statements of what a student is expected to be able to demonstrate following successful completion of a course.

4.5 Course Assessment

49. Assessment of student learning is undertaken at course level, with each student's learning assessed against the course intended learning outcomes and published assessment criteria.
50. Assessment criteria can be the intended learning outcomes for the course or specific criteria aligned to the intended learning outcomes.
51. Course specifications provide assessment information and a detailed assessment scheme which ensures:
- each student's learning is assessed against the stated learning outcomes of the course.
 - an appropriate range of assessment methods are utilised to effectively assess the intended learning outcomes of the course.
 - an appropriate combination of formative and summative assessment points to support the learning process, determine each student's performance and guide subsequent learning.
 - assessment methods are designed to take account of the course SCQF level and credit volume.

4.6 Generic Course Credit Values

52. Course credit values allowed for courses for Undergraduate degree programmes are indicated in the tables below:

Table 4. Undergraduate Degree - Stages / Levels / Courses Credit Values

Stage	SCQF Level	Course Credit Values
4	SCQF 10	10/20/30/40/60/80
3	SCQF 9	10/20/30/40
2	SCQF 8	10/20/30/40
1	SCQF 7	10/20/30/40

53. Courses in Stage 5 of Undergraduate Programmes and Integrated Masters will be SCQF Level 11 with course credit values consistent with those allowed in Stage 4. See Table 4.
54. Course credit values allowed for courses for Taught Postgraduate degree programmes are indicated in the tables below:

Table 5. 1 year Taught Postgraduate Degree - Stages / Levels / Courses Credit Values

Stage	SCQF Level	Course Credit Values
3	SCQF 11	20/40/60
2	SCQF 11	20/40
1	SCQF 11	20/40

Table 6. 2 year Taught Postgraduate Degree - Stages / Levels / Courses Credit Values

Stage	SCQF Level	Course Credit Values
3	SCQF 11	20/40/60/80
2	SCQF 11	20/40
1	SCQF 11	20/40

5. Learning

55. GSA Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes support the development of independent and autonomous learning skills.
56. Programme and Course specifications provide an overview of learning methods and hours, including scheduled contact and notional learning hours.
57. Students share responsibility for their learning, and they are expected to ensure they engage with scheduled learning and manage required independent learning hours.

5.1 Contact Hours

58. Contact hours is the time allocated to scheduled learning, teaching and assessment feedback activities.
59. The allocation of Course contact hours are proportionate to the volume of credits, required learning and level of study.
60. Contact hours come in different forms and will vary according to the discipline, subject, mode of delivery, intended purpose and learning and skills requirements.
61. Contact hours can include but are not limited to:
 - Lectures, Seminars and Tutorials
 - Academic or technical led practical workshops and supervised time in studio and workshops
 - Planned online and blended learning
 - Feedback (one-to-one or in a group) on assessed work
 - Scheduled office hours where staff are available for consultation and discussion

5.2 Notional Learning Hours

62. Notional Learning hours include all the learning activities required to achieve Intended Learning Outcomes, including contact time, independent learning and non-scheduled study.
63. Notional learning and non-scheduled study may include, but is not limited to:
 - Research activities
 - Using the library and VLE for independent study
 - Using the studio and technical workshops for the development of work
 - Reading and researching material in preparation for taught sessions
 - Personal preparation for tutorials, seminars and assessment
 - Self-reflection on learning
64. Notional Learning hours indicated on course specifications are for guidance only. Some students may require less or more time to complete their studies depending on knowledge and skills at point of entry, rate of progression, and any reasonable adjustments made for students with individual learning requirements.

6. Exceptions Rule

65. Exceptions to the GSA Common Academic Framework for individual programmes may be sought by the relevant School.
66. Examples where exceptions may be considered include the following:
 - specific requirements due to accreditation by a professional body
 - programmes with partnership agreements and shared delivery of programme components, including programmes delivered jointly with the University of Glasgow.
67. The rationale for an exception request must be set out in a paper and presented at Boards of Study and a meeting of Academic Council by the relevant School.
68. Application for exceptions to the GSA Common Academic Framework must put forward two programme models; one compliant within the GSA Common Academic Framework and an alternative proposed programme model with a detailed rationale.
69. The Academic Quality Office, on request, will provide guidance on the process for seeking Academic Council consideration and approval.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Awards

The University of Glasgow awards the following degrees in The Glasgow School of Art.

Undergraduate Degrees

Bachelor of Architecture (BArch)
Bachelor of Arts (BA)
Bachelor of Design (BDes)
Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
Bachelor of Science (BSc)
Master of Engineering (MEng)
Master of European Design (MEDes)

Postgraduate Taught Degrees

Diploma in Architecture and Master of Architecture by Conversion (MArch)
Master of Architectural Studies (MArch Studies)
Master of Design (MDes)
Master of Education (MEd)
Master of Fine Art (MFA)
Master of Letters (MLitt)
Master of Science (MSc)

Note: Additional award titles may be agreed during the programme approval process.

Appendix 2. Glossary of Terms

The following glossary of terms for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes outlines vocabulary and definitions common to Glasgow School of Art programmes. It aims to achieve consistency in academic terminology and application in documentation relating to programmes and courses.

- **Award:** an award is the degree, certificate or diploma which is conferred following the successful completion of a defined programme of study.
- **Assessment Criteria:** assessment criteria are used to assess students' learning and performance against the intended learning.
- **Assessment Feedback Session:** a one-to-one meeting between a student and a member of staff to discuss assessment.
- **Assessment Scheme:** a term used to describe all formative and summative assessments within an academic course.
- **Academic Semester:** a block of learning, teaching and assessment used to split the Academic Session.
- **Academic Session:** a term used to describe the academic year which runs three semesters from September to September.
- **Briefing:** a session that presents key information or processes to students.
- **Contact Learning Hours:** contact hours are the time allocated to scheduled learning, teaching and assessment feedback activities. For further guidance see - [QAA Explaining Contact Hours](#).
- **Course:** a course is a self-contained unit of study on a particular topic, with a defined level, credit value, aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery and scheme of assessment.
- **Credit(s):** a measure of workload, where 1 credit equates to 10 notional learning hours.
- **Credit Value:** a term used to describe the number of credits at a specified level, assigned to a course, and awarded upon successful completion of a course. The course credit value is based on the estimated notional learning hours.
- **Credit and Qualifications Framework:** a credit Framework combined with a qualification's framework, for example, the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#).
- **Critique:** a group review of student work with a member of staff or peer-led.
- **Discussion group:** a discursive subject focused teaching session between students and a member of staff.
- **Exchange Study (Partner Institution):** an arrangement where part of the curriculum is delivered by another higher education provider.

- **European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS):** a system used across Europe for the transfer and accumulation of academic credit.
- **Formative Assessment:** assessments that are designed purely to inform both staff and students of the students' progress, allowing the students to reflect on and improve their work in time for the summative assessment point. Formative assessment does not contribute to the final grade of a course.
- **Formative Feedback:** all feedback is formative and provides both staff and students the opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a students work and inform future learning. Formative feedback may be given as a result of a formative or summative assessment or through a range of ongoing teaching activities including, but not limited to, tutorials, reviews and discussion groups etc.
- **Grade Descriptors:** statements that define a level of achievement within a certain band of marks.
- **Group Meeting:** a meeting to discuss or share information, possibly interactive.
- **Group Tutorial:** a meeting between students and a member of staff to review progress or present material.
- **Independent Study:** students studying individually and/or collaboratively without supervision.
- **Individual Tutorial:** a one-to-one discursive teaching session between a student and a member of staff to review progress or present material.
- **Intended Learning Outcomes:** also known as ILOs, define what a student will acquire and be able to demonstrate upon successful completion of a period of learning, course or programme.
- **Lecture:** a presentation delivered to an audience of students, possibly pre-recorded and often involving discursive engagement with and between students.
- **Levels:** an indicator of the relative complexity, depth and autonomy of learning associated with a course, and courses within programme stages. See [SCQF Level Descriptors](#).
- **Marking Scheme:** a detailed framework for assigning marks.
- **Negotiated Technical Learning:** a scheduled session providing technical support for a specific student project.
- **Notional Learning Hours:** the expected total number of hours that a learner at a particular level is expected to require to spend, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes at the specified level. This may include contact hours, directed learning, independent study and assessment.
- **Orientation:** a session offering students an overview of a service and how to access it or general welcome.
- **Presentation:** a subject focused presentation delivered to a specified audience using agreed methods.

- **Programme:** a programme is defined as a set of compulsory and elective courses leading to a defined award, with defined aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, and scheme of assessment.
- **Seminar:** a themed group discussion between a group of students and a member(s) of staff.
- **Stages:** stages within programmes may contain a number of courses. They are set at a specific level of study and designated total amount of credit.
- **Subject Benchmark Statements:** a published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity. The statements are consistent with the relevant generic qualification descriptors. See [QAA Subject Benchmark statements](#).
- **Summative Assessment:** assessments used to determine student performance in relation to intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Summative assessment contributes towards a student's overall grade and also has a formative purpose, providing feedback to students to support reflection and improvement.
- **Technical Induction:** a session that enables students to use technical facilities safely and responsibly.
- **Technical Workshop:** an interactive group session that focuses on the development of a particular technical process or skill.
- **Workshop:** an interactive group session that focuses on the development and exploration of an idea, process or skill.