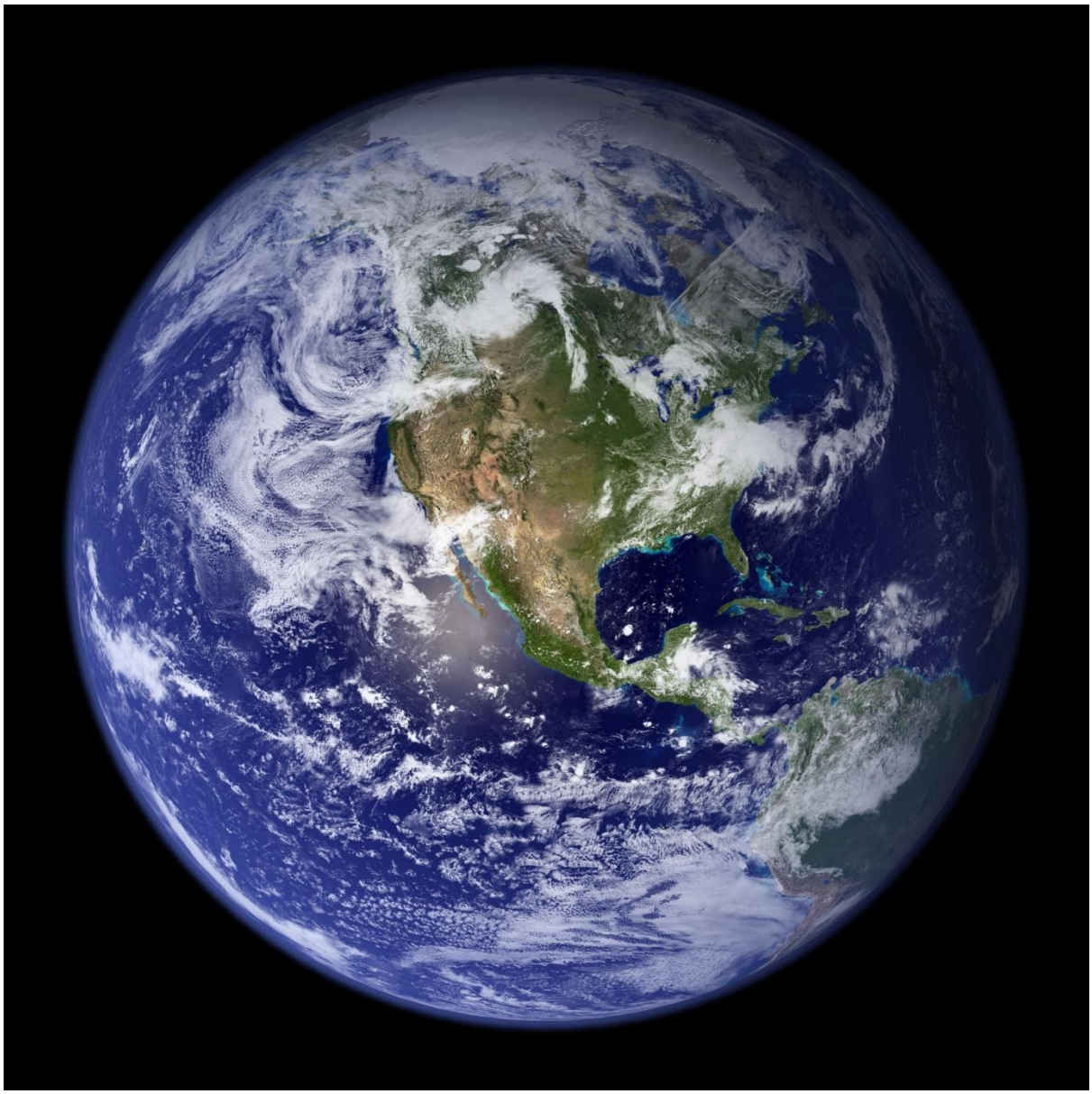
THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Studio 2 – Circular Economy



Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2025-26 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
PDIN 250		2025-26

Course Title	Studio 2 – Circular Economy
Course Contact	Dr. Paul Smith

Credits	40
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Semester 2

Associated Programmes	M.Des in Design Innovation and Circular Economy
Lead School	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	PACAAG April 2025

Course Introduction

The circular economy has become synonymous with a more sustainable and equitable society, one that eliminates waste while creating social, economic and ecological value. Achieving *circularity* requires working collaboratively and recognising the roles governments, industry and citizens can play in a more environmentally conscious future. This course focusses on the exploration of the key schools of thought for a circular economy, how they are applied today, and how they might be applied in a future society. Enabling students to combine circular economy theories and approaches into contemporary design innovation practice, as a method of developing more environmental and socially conscious designs. It aims to foster a re-thinking of our current economy to one that values environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Course Aims

This course aims to:

1. Develop students' critical understanding and sustained engagement with the theory and practice of design innovation, in the context of Circular Economy practice, as an approach to contemporary issues related to people and planet, through a design project. In preparation to Stage 3 Masters Research Project, this course provides a platform to increase the students' ability to contribute to the contemporary debates related to industry and research in the context of the Circular Economy;

2. Expand the students' skills to conceive, manage, and deliver a collaborative design project in the context of the Circular Economy; and demonstrate the value of the methods and approaches focused on people and planet-led sustainability to applied to specified project context(s);

3. Extend the students understanding of contemporary design practice to encompass non-object-based activities, and creatively explore Circular Economy -based innovation of artefacts, systems, services, strategies and the experiences these deliver to people;

4. Provide opportunities for students to develop reflective and collaborative dialogue with a variety of stakeholders, including cross-discipline work and collaborations or interactions with contextual partners (i.e. experts, communities, organisations and other relevant parties) to explore domain-specific professional practices.

5. Equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver and critically discuss design-led innovation using the professional standards, and the verbal and visual language of Circular Economy, through inclusive and appropriate media to project contexts and audiences.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of relevant theories, global and local debates, and their application to project opportunities, demands, and constraints afforded by a given context, through the lens of Circular Economy.

2. Plan and critically apply appropriate research tools and methods relevant to Circular Economy innovation to explore and interpret project contexts and themes, and support project development.

3. Develop, iterate and test innovative Circular Economy proposals informed by insights gathered from project collaborations and research to address demands, constraints, opportunities or challenges within a given context.

4. Critically reflect on individual and collaborative processes and interactions, their ethics, and the potential impact of a design-led innovation and Circular Economy proposal in a given context.

5. Communicate to professional standards and with supporting evidence, a Circular Economy proposal and its potential impact in a given context, using appropriate media for a variety of audiences.

Indicative Content

This course seeks to equip students with the skills and knowledge to apply innovation in practical ways to develop more ecologically conscious and circular services, systems, businesses, and communities. It extends student engagement with the methods, tools and theories of design innovation introduced and developed in Stage One. It provides a significant emphasis on the study of the Circular Economy and applicable theories and practices within this domain. It provides students with the skills to select and apply appropriate Design Innovation and Circular Economy tools and methods in a collaborative project. It emphasises the approach of cross disciplinarity within a design innovation context.

In general, through case studies, expert talks, seminars, and tutorials the course will cover topics such as:

- Circular economy design innovation as a project process.
- The circular economy as a set of key theoretical approaches to design
- The opportunities and barriers to designing for a circular economy
- The environmental impact of design
- Circular assessment of design concepts

- Project management and delivery (particularly in collaborative contexts and with external stakeholders or clients)
- Ethical considerations of a design innovation project

Studio 2 should be viewed in context within the whole programme. It builds on work in Stage One in which students have been introduced to, and practiced, several key innovation methods and approaches, and have worked in groups to explore a range of challenges in different contexts, and to develop and present ideas. In turn, Studio 2 provides a further foundation to Stage Three which takes the form of an independent project.

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

The principal teaching strategies employed in this practice-based course are:

Lectures and seminars - used to disseminate theoretical, methodological, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues related to each course which can be used to underpin practical studio work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials, studio sessions or further enquiry in self- directed learning or research.

Live projects - projects with external partners and/or thematic experts allowing students to gain a proximity with current professional standards and practices associated with design innovation.

Critiques/Presentations - an important learning device used to generate peer debate regarding the generation, development or overall success of concepts, and their practical realisation within the context of a project brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers, tutors and stakeholders or contextual partners through appropriate visual and verbal means (including: models or mock-ups, portfolios, videos, slideshows, etc.). The crit enables the development of key presentation skills, and encourages students to give constructive feedback regarding each other's work, and an opportunity to debate project input. These may be tutor-led, tutor-facilitated, or peer-led allowing students to fully explore all aspects of practical submissions within a reflective discursive framework.

Tutorials - designed to provide academic support through individual or group meetings with staff to discuss the different directions and aspects of projects or course-based activities as well as progress on the programme/course overall.

Self-Directed Learning and Research - in line with other taught postgraduate programmes at GSA, significant emphasis in the Design Innovation programme is placed on self-directed study, from project design and development, to gaining theoretical knowledge through traditional research methods. This emphasises autonomy, reflection upon personal learning and self-directed project work within an individual and a collaborative environment.

Guest Speaker sessions (when relevant) – include input from visiting lecturers/guests from industry and research staff enabling students access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial context. Guests often include professionals from our global alumni community to aid students in developing their own professional practice and prepare for employment, contributing with expert knowledge to the course through the sharing of knowledge, professional paths, case studies, projects, and where practical and applicable will offer critical input to ongoing project work.

The course uses Canvas, a virtual learning environment tool, for the dissemination, discussion and access to relevant course information, and signpost to other relevant teaching and learning platforms used by GSA.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
48	400

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods
Formative feedback is an ongoing process undertaken through reviews and tutorials with staff. As part of studio-based learning, regular contact with tutors provides students continuous and detailed feedback on their work. Students submit a formal presentation of their work at a mid-way point in the course. Tutors offer oral feedback on how best to improve and build upon existing work to date with the support of peer note-taking to expand upon and consolidate the received feedback. Due to the nature of the innovation process, formative assessment does not result in a predicted grade. However, students who appear to be at risk of failure will be offered individual tutorials as appropriate to provide targeted support.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements
In this course, summative assessment is designed to replicate professional practices associated with design innovation projects. Students are supported in developing skills in a range of appropriate research and development methods, and in a collaborative group work setting. Summative assessment has two components as set out below: one group submission and one individual submission. The presentation results in a single group grade. The project document results in an individual grade for each student. Students are awarded an aggregate grade based on the weighted grades of the two components, and are not required to pass both separately for the award of credit. Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment. Written feedback will be given. Reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course are outlined in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Presentation of project Outcome (group): presentation to faculty and peers of a project outcome, it's rationale and expected impact in the explored context, with supporting materials when applicable.	40	12
Project Document (individual): 3,000-4,000 word visual document offering a reflective, evidenced and critical narrative of project process, decisions and outcomes. There should be a clearly identified response to the context within the brief based on research and analysis. This document should include text-based and visual elements including sketchbook-evidence of an iterative creative process.	60	12

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	No
Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
If yes, then please provide the names of the other teaching institutions	N/A

Reading and On-line Resources
The course indicative Reading and on-line resource list is accessible via Resource Lists. This list will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.