

Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification

Programme Title: MASTER OF FINE ART (MFA)



Image courtesy of Yolanda Garcia Ceballos

1. Programme Details	
Programme Title	Master of Fine Art
School	School of Fine Art
Programme Leader	TBC
Award to be Conferred	Master of Fine Art
Exit Awards	Stage 1: Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) Stage 2: Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Stage 3: Master of Fine Art (MFA)
SCQF Level	Level 11
Credits	240
Mode of Study	Full Time
HECOS Code	100059

Academic Session	2025-2026
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2025

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

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	N/A
A Levels	N/A
Other	<p>An undergraduate degree in Fine Art or a related subject area or equivalent professional practice.</p> <p>Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio, of work, 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.</p>
English Language Requirements	<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.0 with a minimum of 5.5 in all components; <p>An alternative Accepted English Language Test which can be found on the Postgraduate ‘How to Apply’ page of the GSA website.</p>

3. Programme Introduction

The Master of Fine Art (MFA) at The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is recognised globally as a specialist practice-based postgraduate fine art programme at the forefront of contemporary artistic practice and education. The programme is designed to prepare and support artists for success in professional practice and advanced research.

Central to this success is a dynamic and vibrant studio-based learning environment fostered by a diverse and inclusive community of artists committed to critical thinking and multidisciplinary approaches. The MFA curriculum emphasises new and emerging methodologies in contemporary art practice, encouraging curiosity, experimentation, and speculation with an ever-broadening range of materials and media. Equally important is helping you explore how your artistic practice and research engage with different contexts, settings, and audiences to understand how your work can impact the art world and beyond. Embedded within Glasgow's uniquely dynamic art scene, where artist-led collectives, public institutions and commercial galleries freely intermingle, the MFA welcomes students to benefit from and contribute to city's artistic and cultural community.

A full-time programme of 60 weeks over two years with a summer break, leading to 240 credits at SCQF Level 11, the MFA provides an extended opportunity to reflect, develop and reposition your artistic practice and research. The curriculum nurtures individual and collective ambition, self-direction, and distinctiveness of practice within a mutually supportive, diverse, and thriving studio community. Driven by critical intelligence and artistic quality, the curriculum promotes openness to change through tutorials, group critiques, seminars, electives, and exhibition-making, strengthening your proficiency in artistic making and research methods. In addition to programme-specific studio-based courses, MFA students also study a course in research methods and methodologies for artistic practice alongside other postgraduate students in the School of Fine Art. You further extend your practice by participating in the GSA Postgraduate Taught Cross-School Electives programme.

The programme benefits artists from wide-ranging backgrounds and stages of career. It cultivates an international, cross-cultural community and network ensuring you benefit from multiple, diverse perspectives throughout your studies and beyond. Overall, the MFA provides diverse and dynamic learning opportunities for you to synthesise and integrate multiple skills, knowledge and abilities, allowing you to confidently and purposefully establish and extend your artistic practice professionally.

4. Programme Aims

The programme aims to:

- Enable the development of creative practice in relationship to an understanding of historical, theoretical and contemporary debates within fine art.
- Encourage a speculative and critically analytical approach to existing disciplinary norms and conventions in the context of fine art as an expanded field of practice.
- Broaden and deepen your knowledge to critically evaluate and develop practice.
- Facilitate enhancement and acquisition of practical skills whilst identifying and applying appropriate research methods and methodologies in creative practice.

- Support the acquisition of transferable communication, presentation and exhibition skills through a breadth of learning opportunities, including collaboration with peers in the public presentation of work.
- Cultivate knowledge and understanding of professional practice in fine art, including its broader socio-economic and environmental impact, promoting good practice applicable to a range of contexts.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

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

- Critically re-appraise work demonstrating an intellectual and creative ability to identify, characterise and address problems related to historical, theoretical, and contextual aspects of practice within contemporary discourse.
- Establish an advanced understanding of the relations between studio practice, theory and context by speculatively and critically analysing disciplinary norms and conventions in Fine Art and its expanded field.
- Plan, execute and evaluate new work whilst establishing an 'independent voice' as an artist, applying a range of skills and techniques associated with current developments in fine art.
- Demonstrate originality and creativity in developing studio practice informed and enhanced by research methods and methodologies and skills acquisition in the synthesis and consolidation of artwork.
- Exercise autonomy, independence and initiative in the conception and production of practice and research,
- Apply good practice in a range of professional contexts, demonstrating an advanced understanding of existing and emerging opportunities within and beyond the arts and culture sector.

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

A dynamic range of teaching and learning approaches are employed to support you in engaging with the curriculum and achieving the intended learning outcomes. Our dialogic approach to learning and teaching is intended to help you develop your ability to direct your practice and research independently over the course of the programme. Your learning objective is to become an expert in your practice, what it can become, and how to achieve that.

Methods range from task-based structured learning through lectures and seminars to diagnostic approaches to studio practice through tutorials and group critiques, from technical inductions and workshops to project briefings and exhibition-making. Most learning happens in the studio and focuses on the material, formal and conceptual dimensions of your practice in relation to relevant critical, cultural or theoretical contexts. Thinking through making is central to developing the quality of your work, so technician-led demonstrations, inductions, and consultations in workshops are essential features of how you will learn digital and physical skills, materials, and techniques.

You have regular opportunities to present and discuss your work at different stages of development with tutors and peers, supporting your ability to identify and reflect upon the key concerns, obstacles and opportunities in your practice. Seminars and reading groups provide opportunities to

contextualise approaches to practice and broaden knowledge of your field of contemporary art practice. At times, you will produce draft writing in the form of statements and proposals and, at one stage, an extended essay to be discussed in tutorials. Independent learning skills will be developed and supported through guided activities and digital online learning resources available on Canvas.

Student-led peer learning is essential to the programme's culture. Well-established initiatives have included a regular informal 'crit club' and collaborative approaches to independently organised group exhibitions in venues across the city. The latter stages of stage 2 and stage 3 focus on producing work for public exhibitions supported by professional practice workshops relevant to a range of skills, such as writing exhibition copy to installing and documenting work professionally. Where appropriate and beneficial, online learning and delivery augment and enhance curriculum.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Various assessment methods are used across the programme-specific and shared courses that make up the MFA. These include self-evaluative writing, presentations, research proposals, essays and portfolios, depending on your choice of elective in Stage 2 and weighting of studio and dissertation courses in Stage 3.

Formative assessment, a key part of your learning process, enables you to gain ongoing tutor and peer feedback while developing your work for the summative submission over the length of each course. This continuous feedback loop is designed to support and encourage you in your learning journey. You will actively participate in assessment through regular self-reflection and critical evaluation to encourage increasing self-direction. Formative assessment activities with staff and peers include group crits, progress reviews and tutorials offering ongoing formative feedback as you progress through each course within the programme.

Summative Assessment is designed to support you in reviewing, documenting, collating and presenting work produced throughout the programme in response to various learning opportunities. The primary method of summative assessment for programme-specific studio courses in the MFA is a body of work presented in a studio display and/or public exhibition and documented in a digital portfolio. Although comprising different elements, this work is assessed holistically as a single component and awarded a single grade. Doing so supports the equitable assessment of a wide range of contemporary art practices, especially process-driven work incorporating site-specific and event-based working methods whose default exhibition mode is not the white cube gallery. It also recognises the integrity of a body of work and your ability to account for the relationship between process and outcome, theory and practice reflection and outcome in ways that reflect the distinctiveness of your practice.

Details of assessment methods relevant to learning in each Stage of the programme are provided in relevant course specifications and accompanied by briefings and guidance on presenting work for assessment.

Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment.

8. Programme Structure				
Stage 1				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Critical Review of Studio Practice	40	11	1	PMFA101
Practice as Research	20	11	1	PCXS101
Total Stage Credits	60			

Stage 2				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Exploring Studio Practice	40	11	2	PMFA203
GSA PGT Cross-School Elective	20	11	2	
Total Stage Credits	60			

Stage 3				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Theorising Studio Practice	20	11	1	PMFA302
Consolidating Studio Practice	80	11	1 and 2	PMFA301
Professional Practice	20	11	2	PMFA303
<i>or</i>				
Theorising Studio Practice (Extended)	40	11	1	PMFA304
Consolidating Studio Practice	80	11	1 and 2	PMFA301
Total Stage Credits	120			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements
<p>Exchange opportunities on the MFA programme are only available in Stage 3, Semester 1. Comprehensive information about outgoing exchange opportunities is available on a dedicated canvas course and an in-person Q&A session in Stage 1, Semester 1.</p> <p>If interested, you should also contact the MFA Programme Leader at the earliest opportunity to begin discussing and agreeing on a draft learning agreement that will be the basis of the exchange to ensure you understand the courses and credits undertaken in stage 3. This conversation and support are particularly important for the MFA, where your final degree result is normally based on all 120 credits of Stage 3. We will help you make informed decisions to support your enjoyment and success in your exchange abroad.</p> <p>Having spoken with the Programme Leader you can formally apply via the GSA International Office, naming the institution you wish to attend. The proposed host institution will then consider your application and offer you a place to study, subject to the availability of places and the appropriateness of your proposal related to what they can offer.</p> <p>We also welcome applications for incoming exchange students in Stage 3, Semester 1, although we are limited in the number we can accommodate. Visiting student applications are reviewed by the</p>

MFA programme team to establish the viability of the applications received. The applications that most fully align with the ethos of the MFA programme are generally successful, subject to availability of space. All incoming exchange students take a bespoke, stand-alone 60-credit Stage 3 course, 'Consolidating Studio Practice (Exchange)', focusing on studio practice and simplifying arrangements for credit transfer with their home institution.

Stage 3 Exchange and Visiting Student Courses				
Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Consolidating Studio Practice (Exchange)	60	11	1	PMFA305 (TBC)

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:

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements#>

QAA Subject Benchmark Statements on Art and Design (2016), History of Art, Architecture and Design (2019). See also QAA Characteristics Statement for Master's Degrees (2020)

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, you should consult the university regulations applicable to the academic session in which you first registered for the degree programme in question.