

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification**

**Course Title: Designing for Sustainable Urban Environments**



*Image Credit: Daniel Smith*

*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 Academic Year.*

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
	100583 (50%); 100121 (30%); 100594 (20%)	<b>2026-2027</b>

Course Title	Designing for Sustainable Urban Environments
Course Contact	<b>Isabel Deakin</b>

Credits	20
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Stage 2

Associated Programmes	Master of Science in Sustainable Cities Master of Science in Architectural Futures: Practice Based Research
Lead School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval September 2025

Course Introduction
<p>The Designing for Sustainable Urban Environments course is a studio-based course that enables students to apply the knowledge and theories gained in previous Stage 1 courses to develop a spatial response to a speculative urban context.</p> <p>The course is designed to give students skills to develop, deliver and communicate a project set in the city of Glasgow which explores the nature of urban form at a strategic and detailed level. This project is intended to allow students to develop an understanding of how the design of the physical and spatial frameworks of the city and urban environments might provide a sustainable urban future.</p> <p>Working with a specific theme, students develop an urban design proposal that demonstrates an applied understanding of the six key principles of sustainability within an urban context. Themes will relate to the knowledge and understanding gained in the Contemporary Urbanism and Urban Design course.</p> <p>Through weekly tutorials, students will be supported in developing ethical and context driven responses. The course provides a platform for students to test spatial ideas and explore the role of urban design as a tool for providing economic, environmental and social equity for people and planetary wellbeing.</p> <p>The project provides students with an opportunity to consolidate their learning in Stage 1 and provides them with skills to support their final Stage 3 submission.</p>

### Course Aims

The aims of the course are to:

**professionalism:** facilitate a student's critical awareness of environmental, economic and social responsibilities in the development of sustainable urban design proposals within a defined Glasgow context.

**design/create:** facilitate a student's development of a spatial design response that integrates theoretical frameworks, sustainability principles, and environmental analysis within an urban setting.

**research:** facilitate a student's understanding of relevant urban theories, sustainability models and legislative frameworks to inform a place-based urban design proposal.

**communication:** facilitate a student's development of a coherent and critically informed urban design strategy using visual and written methods appropriate to both professional and academic audiences.

**skills:** facilitate a student's application of environmental testing and analytical techniques to assess and refine spatial proposals in relation to performance, sustainability and usability.

**knowledge:** facilitate a student's contextual understanding of sustainable urbanism through the integration of theory, policy and site-specific analysis in a studio-based project.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to **appraise, integrate and articulate:**

**professionalism:** a critical awareness of environmental, economic and social responsibilities in the development of sustainable urban design proposals within a defined Glasgow context.

**design/create:** a spatial design response that integrates theoretical frameworks, sustainability principles, and environmental analysis within an urban setting.

**research:** relevant urban theories, sustainability models and legislative frameworks to inform a place-based urban design proposal.

**communication:** a coherent and critically informed urban design strategy using visual and written methods appropriate to both professional and academic audiences.

**skills:** the application of environmental testing and analytical techniques to assess and refine spatial proposals in relation to performance, sustainability and usability.

**knowledge:** a contextual understanding of sustainable urbanism through the integration of theory, policy and site-specific analysis in a studio-based project.

### Indicative Content

This course enables students to synthesise theoretical and practical learning through the development of an urban design project and undertake environmental testing.

During this course, students will:

- Respond to a themed design brief focused on a specific urban context within Glasgow.
- Develop a spatial proposal that responds to the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable cities.
- Use theoretical urban frameworks and sustainability principles introduced in previous courses to inform the design process.
- Analyse the proposal through relevant legislation and guidance frameworks including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Learn how to translate research findings into creative design strategies that reflect sustainable principles.
- Work iteratively in studio tutorials to test and refine design ideas through drawings and models.
- Present a final design proposal with supporting documentation demonstrating critical thinking and contextual understanding.

### Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

#### Pedagogy:

The course is intended to provide students with the opportunity to synthesise theoretical and practical learning through the development of an urban design project.

#### Delivery:

The course is delivered through regular tutorials, peer reviews and seminars, using a range of learning and teaching activities.

#### Timetable:

The course is delivered over 10 weeks, 2 hours per week. Studio tutorials are delivered either in groups or individually with pin-up tutorials and design reviews at set points throughout the session concluding with a design forum at the end of the project.

#### Canvas:

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

### Indicative Contact Hours

20

### Notional Learning Hours

200

### Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Formative feedback is delivered during the course following a formative submission in week 6, offering students the opportunity to obtain staff feedback towards their final submission.

As such formative feedback provided fosters reflective learning while supporting the summative graded assessment and feedback process, which generally happens at the end of the course.

#### Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is undertaken at the end of the course and is designed and delivered to support student learning. Students' work is assessed against the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each course.

Summative assessment in this course is undertaken through a coursework assignment in the form of a portfolio presentation of a design project. Coursework assignment submissions involve visual and text-based submissions utilising both digital and physical tools and formats. Written feedback is provided on all summative assessments.

All submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the GSA Code of Assessment. Reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course are outlined in the GSA Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
<b>Portfolio</b> Students are required to submit a digital portfolio of work which will be holistically assessed. The Portfolio will incorporate the presentation of their design project and critical reflections.	100	Semester 2, week 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	

#### Reading and On-line Resources

Supporting the course, an indicative reading and on-line resource list is accessible via [Resource Lists](#). This list will be reviewed and updated annually. Supervisors, tutors and peers will provide further recommendations appropriate to student's chosen research subject.