

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Elective Research Paper

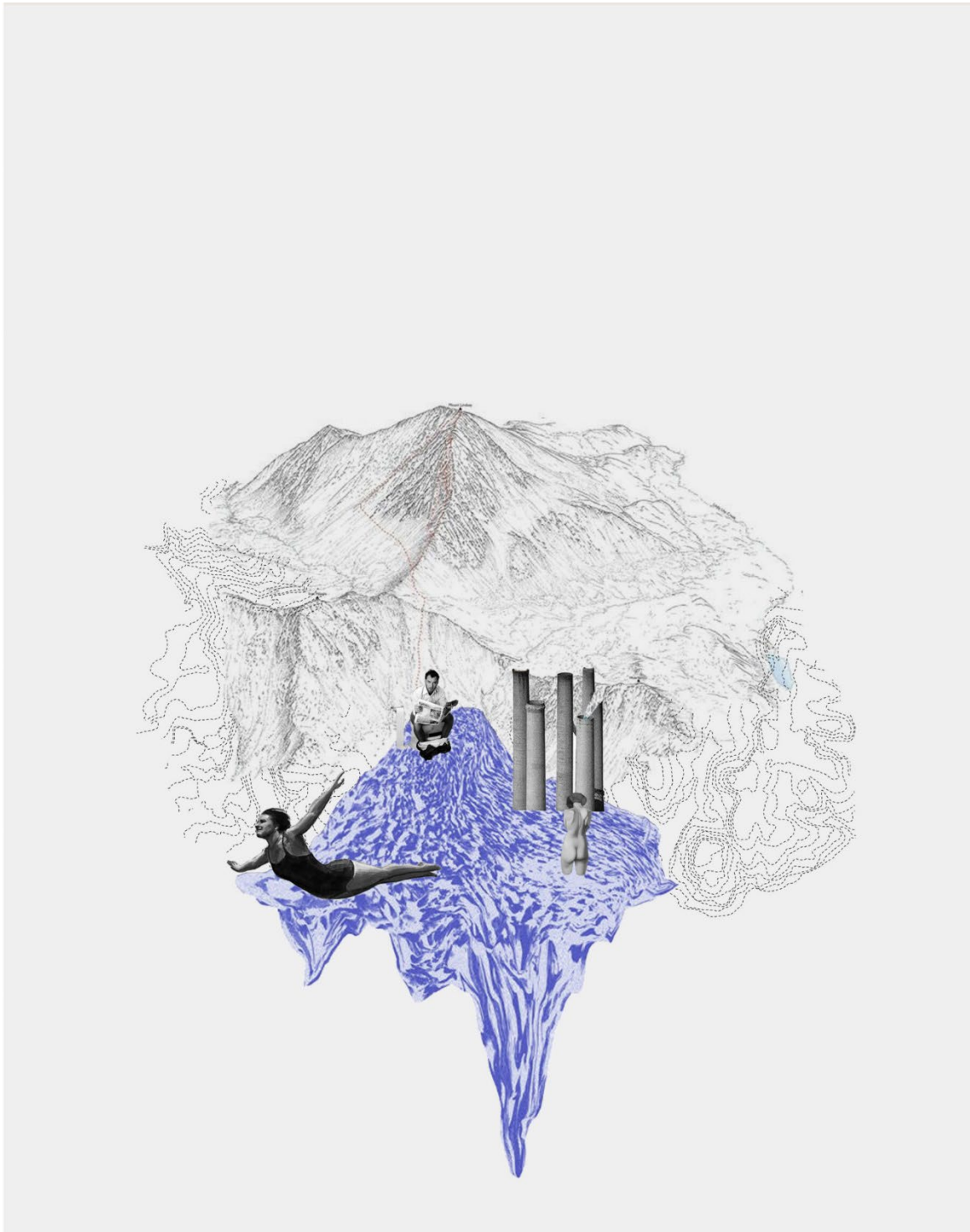


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Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
	100583 (50%); 100962 (50%)	2026-27

Course Title	Elective Research Paper
Course Contact	Isabel Deakin

Credits	20
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Semester 1

Associated Programmes	Master of Architectural Studies in Creative Urban Practices Master of Architectural Studies in Digital Creativity Master of Architectural Studies in Energy and Environment Master of Architectural Studies in History and Theory of the City Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Buildings Master of Architectural Studies in Urban Design
Lead School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval October 2025

Course Introduction

The Elective Research Paper offers students the opportunity to gain knowledge in an alternative specialism. Students can benefit from the multi-disciplinary nature of the Programme and develop a deeper understanding in this alternative specialism through lectures and tutorials. This knowledge is designed to support a greater understanding of the broad field of architecture and allows students to relate this new knowledge to their own specialist study.

Through this course students can research, analyse and develop their wider research interest within an alternative specialism as well as developing skills and knowledge on research methodologies, the identification and resolution of a research question and academic writing practice.

Students are taught through a combination of group and individual tutorials and lectures and seminars. Through formative feedback and peer sessions, students apply their learning on the course across the semester.

Course Aims

The aims of the course are to:

professionalism: facilitate a student's command of knowledge of professional ethics through the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

design/create: facilitate a student's command of a creative design process through the production of an appropriate response through academic writing, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

research: facilitate a student's command of research skills with a self-directed research question and the development of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, in an alternative specialism

communication: facilitate a student's command of the integration of analogue and digital media to visually and verbally communicate structured thinking through the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

skills: facilitate a student's command of critical reflection, communication and a structured methodology, with digital and analogue tools, through the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

knowledge: facilitate a student's command of the creative use of advanced architectural theories, concepts, and techniques to address social, ethical and climate change challenges through the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the Course students will be able to **appraise, integrate and articulate:**

professionalism: knowledge of professional ethics to produce an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

design/ create: a creative design process in the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

research: research skills in the production of an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

communication: the integration of analogue and digital media to visually and verbally communicate structured thinking to produce an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

skills: critical reflection, communication and a structured methodology, with digital and analogue tools, to produce an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

knowledge: the creative use of advanced architectural theories, concepts, and techniques to address social, ethical and climate change challenges to produce an appropriate response through academic writing practice, to a self-directed research question in an alternative specialism

Indicative Content

The Elective Research Paper is designed to support a student to appraise, integrate and articulate their wider research interest within an alternative specialist subject and develop a research question which is tested through the preparation and analysis of developed case studies, precedents and theories. Students will evidence their literature review, relevant research, their chosen methodology and an appropriate response through academic writing practice. Students are required to critically reflect and draw conclusions from research and relate this to their chosen specialism subject.

During the course students will be supported to:

- undertake fieldwork and/or desktop/library research to analyse a topic of their choice
- produce a literature review and set their own approach in a scholarly context
- sustain an individual line of inquiry
- test a hypothesis based on appropriate sources
- critically reflect and draw conclusions from research undertaken

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

Pedagogy:

Studio is both a learning space and a form of reflective practice where knowledge, skills and attributes are transformed into design led research competencies. Integration of the six learning domains enables design led research work to be grounded in specialist knowledge relating to the student's chosen alternative specialist subject. This course is intended to develop students' mastery of academic writing practice while deploying their critical, ethical and professional position. Student learning is developed through the course, supported by lectures, tutorials and seminars, which enable students to address real-world issues in the context of wider architectural practice. Groupwork and collaboration with other students are core to the student learning experience, enabling students to work productively with others while contextualising the role of the architect in relation to other disciplines and practices. Specialist staff along with visiting guests offer students insights into the constantly changing world of architectural practice. Independent learning is fostered throughout the year.

Delivery:

The course is delivered through regular studio sessions, using a range of learning and teaching activities, including individual and group tutorials, seminars and lectures by staff and invited guests. Peer discussions offer the opportunity for critical discourse around issues raised by the Elective Research Paper, enabling staff and students to enter into a dialogue around contemporary architectural issues. A hybrid approach to learning through in-person sessions and on-line support offers students access to flexible and inclusive learning.

Timetable:

Lectures, Seminars and Tutorials.

Canvas:

The virtual learning environment 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 activities are provided during studio courses, offering students the opportunity to obtain ongoing staff and peer feedback through discussion and review in relation to the course.

As such Formative feedback provided throughout the course 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 assessments 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 3,000-word essay. 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
Essay Students are required to submit an essay (3000 words) in response to a self-directed research question supported by a bibliography	100	Semester 1 Week 13

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.