Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification
Programme Title: Master of Science in Sustainable Cities
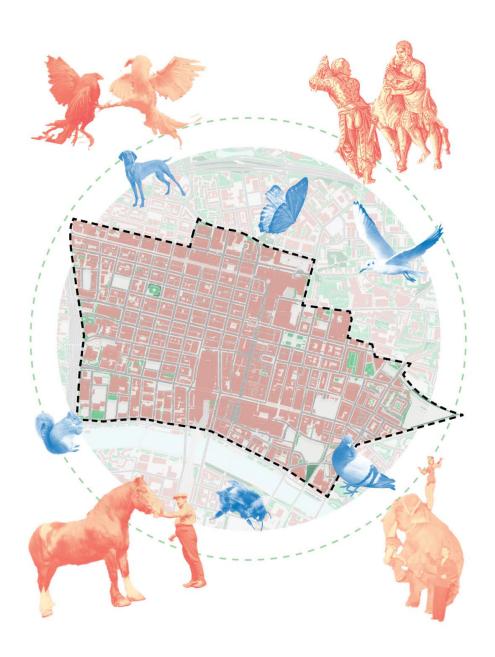

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1. Programme Details	
Programme Title	Master of Science in Sustainable Cities
School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Programme Leader	Isabel Deakin
Award to be Conferred	Master of Science in Sustainable Cities
Exit Awards	Stage 1: Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Cities Stage 2: Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Cities Stage 3: Master of Science in Sustainable Cities
SCQF Level	11
Credits	180
Mode of Study	Full time
HECOS Code	100583, 100594, 100962,100121

Academic Session	2026-27
Date of Approval	Programme Approval September 2025

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

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	
A Levels	
Other	Applicants require an Undergraduate Degree with minimum Honours Degree or equivalent in a field relevant to the programme. Along with the completed application form, students must submit: • A personal statement • Evidence of relevant academic qualifications • Two academic references Additional entry requirements: Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio of work, along with satisfactory academic references and a personal statement as part of their application. Applicants may also be required to attend an interview as part of their admissions assessment.
English Language Requirements	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. 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: • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6.5 with a minimum of 5.5 in all components; • An alternative Accepted English Language Test which can be found on the Postgraduate 'How to Apply' page of the GSA website.

3. Programme Introduction

The Master of Science (MSc) in Sustainable Cities programme explores urban sustainability challenges through the application of research, policy analysis and design to city futures.

Balancing theory and practice in real-world contexts, students on the programme examine critical issues in sustainable urban development. Using Glasgow as the contextual framework for the programme, students engage with urban and environmental challenges as they impact the city's infrastructure, landscape and morphology. The UN Sustainable Development Goals provides a key reference ensuring the global relevance of Glasgow-based research.

The structure of the programme aims to create a dynamic environment where individual research interests can connect with researchers within the Mackintosh School of Architecture and the wider community of artists and designers at the Glasgow School of Art, offering students the opportunity to develop their creative practice while building their academic and professional networks.

The programme is offered on a full-time basis and aims to equip graduates for careers in urban planning, environmental impact, policy development and related fields.

Programme Structure
The programme is structured in three stages. Each stage reflects a progressive learning journey:

From   foundational learning and ethical inquiry,
 to   integration through practice and skills,
 to   final synthesis via critical research writing or design production.

Stage 1: Framing Urban Futures: developing foundational knowledge, research skills, and ethical awareness in the context of contemporary urbanism and urban design.

In Stage 1, students critically explore urban theory, environmental systems and research methods, building the intellectual and creative scaffolding for this programme. Through core lectures, seminars and critical readings, students explore the theoretical frameworks and histories underpinning sustainable city design. Emphasis is placed on establishing core competencies, ethical awareness and research literacy.

Stage 2: Designing Sustainable Environments: Exploration of sustainable urban design, digital tools and innovation.

This stage focuses on deepening student's subject knowledge through case-based learning and group studio projects. Students develop fluency in both urban design and sustainable practices whilst also gaining knowledge on digital technologies.

Alongside this, students choose a post graduate elective offered across the Glasgow School of Art, in Stage 2.

Stage 3: Urban Futures in Action: Independent research into urgent urban sustainability challenges.

This final stage provides a platform for self-directed inquiry. Students either undertake a research led dissertation or a design-led project that evidences their understanding of the complex issues of the 21st Century urban environment and speculates on the possibility of a more equitable, resilient and sustainable city.

The MSc in Sustainable Cities programme balances taught time and independent study to develop students as critical reflective practitioners with all learning delivered through a framework of six learning domains: Professionalism, Design/Create, Research, Communication, Skills, and Knowledge.

The Programme is predominantly lecture and seminar based, with a specific studio-based course in Stage 2. Canvas is used as the main tool for communication, organisation and the source of resources for students alongside a range of e-learning tools (Padlet, Miro, and Planet e-stream). A variety of teaching and learning approaches including in person, blended and synchronous and asynchronous online learning and delivery, are employed to support student engagement. A diverse range of learning and teaching methods encourage students to be curious, confident and above all independent in developing their personal responses to the morphologies of sustainable cities.

On completion of the programme, the primary aim is that graduatesare engaged citizens, critical thinkers, skilled communicators, inclusive and creative collaborators and life-long learners.

4. Programme Aims

The aims of the programme enable students to:

- Critically engage with contemporary urban and environmental challenges whilst questioning and enhancing the creative role of architecture and urban design to respond to the ethical and environmental challenges of the 21st Century.

- Become creative self-reflective thinkers whose practice is informed by inclusive, sustainable, ethical and collaborative approaches, made visible through self-directed decisions in addressing social and environmental urban issues.

- Develop and apply research methodologies, design methods and specialist approaches to support innovative responses to contemporary urban contexts.

- Communicate sophisticated architectural and urban design propositions through appropriate, multimodal means to a range of audiences in a variety of settings.

- Develop iterative, research-led design skills and conceptual thinking, enabling the exploration and expansion of their individual practice grounded in experimentation, critical enquiry, and contextual relevance.

- Apply sustainable design principles, policies to real-world or speculative urban contexts while proposing original and sustainable speculations for cities of the future.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

After full participation in and successful completion of the programme, students will be able to **synthesise, speculate and articulate:**

Professionalism: autonomy, ethical awareness and critical reflection in addressing complex urban sustainability challenges, through research and practice, showing responsibility to communities, policy, and environmental justice.

Design/ Create: innovative, critically informed urban or spatial propositions that integrate social, environmental, and technological considerations within urban environments at a master's level.

Research: the application of rigorous research methods, design methodologies and practices to explore contemporary urban questions and produce evidence-based insights that contribute to discourse and practice around Sustainable Cities.

Communication: complex urban challenges, research findings and design proposals clearly and effectively using appropriate modes of representation to engage diverse audiences.

S**kills:** applied digital, analytical and reflective skills to explore, communicate, and test urban environments and sustainability challenges at different scales.

Knowledge: a critical and contextual knowledge and understanding sustainability theory and practice, applied to urban environments.

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

MSA offers a comprehensive and innovative learning experience that combines the richness of lecture and seminar-based learning with some studio-based architectural education supported by digital software developments and online delivery methods.

While curriculum delivery is predominantly in-person, online delivery methods supplement in-person delivery to offer students flexibility and accessibility. Online lectures, virtual workshops, and interactive design sessions allow students to participate in learning activities, providing them with the opportunity to manage their studies effectively while meeting their personal commitments. Students have access to digital software and tools commonly used in contemporary architecture and urban design, including 3D modelling, visualization software, and other digital platforms that facilitate innovative design processes and foster creativity.

Within the Studio, design tutorials are offered in a range of groups sizes. Group tutorials encourage peer-to-peer learning through the exchange of ideas and critical engagement with the work of others. Design Reviews are generally arranged at the mid and endpoint of studio projects to encourage discussions around the design issues raised by the studio project.

Field trips are an essential aspect of the learning experience connecting student projects with real world situations, grounding students design propositions in places and communities with specific environmental issues.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Assessment is undertaken through both formative and summative tasks. Formative assessment offers students the opportunity to obtain ongoing staff and peer feedback through discussion and review throughout the course. As such the Formative assessment process provided during the course supports the Summative assessment process which is generally undertaken at the end of the course.

Summative assessment is designed to support student learning through evaluation of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each course. Summative assessment is undertaken through coursework assignments and/or formal written examinations. Coursework involves visual and text-based submissions in both digital and physical formats including design portfolios, technical studies and written essays. All summative assessment and feedback are provided using assessment rubrics and in relation to GSA's Code of Assessment.

During the academic session staff deliver assessment workshops with students clarifying the assessment processes applied within the Programme.

8.Programme Structure

Stage 1

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Core Research Methods: Research Primer for Architects	20	11	1	
Contemporary Urbanism and Urban Design	20	11	1	
Energy and Urban Environments	20	11	1	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

Stage 2

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Designing for Sustainable Urban Environments	20	11	2	
Digital Technologies and Urban Innovation	20	11	2	
Post Graduate Elective	20	11	2	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

Stage 3

Course	Credits	SCQF Level	Semester	Course Code
Independent Research Project – Sustainable Cities	60	11	3	
Total Stage Credits	**60**			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements
N/A

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: The QAA statement regarding Masters level education available at the following link: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/master's-degree-characteristics-statement.pdf The Level 11 Descriptors provided by the SCQF governing attainment during PGT level study, available at: https://scqf.org.uk/support/credit-rating-bodies/level-descriptors/

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, students should consult the University Regulations which were in force in the academic session in which they first registered for the degree programme in question.