

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification

Course Title: Studio Work 2B Environmental Architecture



Image Credit: Edward Christie

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
TBC	100122/100583	2026-27

Course Title	Studio Work 2B Environmental Architecture
Course Contact	

Credits	30
SCQF Level	Level 8
When Taught	Semester 2

Associated Programmes	BSc Environmental Architecture with Honours
Lead School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval September 2025

Course Introduction
Building on the Studio Work 2A course, the Studio Work 2B Environmental Architecture course deepens students' engagement with the design of environmentally responsive architecture at the urban scale of a small rural town. The course enables students to develop their design methodology through collaborative practice, interdisciplinary thinking, and environmental performance analysis. Students are encouraged to explore how design decisions impact and are shaped by environmental, economic, and cultural systems in a rural context. The course positions environmental performance as a core driver of design. Students are introduced to more advanced tools and methods of environmental evaluation, including daylight and thermal simulation, site-specific energy modelling, and material lifecycle assessment. These tools support iterative and data-informed design processes that integrate low-carbon strategies into the core of architectural thinking. Studio Work 2B Environmental Architecture supports the development of students' critical design methodologies, informed by research in architectural history, technology, and professionalism. Students refine their visual and verbal communication skills, applying both analogue and digital media to articulate complex environmental strategies and spatial narratives. The studio is delivered through tutorials, lectures, fieldwork, and skills workshops. Studio briefs are accompanied by key readings that locate the project within a wider architectural and environmental discourse. Regular feedback and peer engagement support students in testing and communicating their ideas throughout the design process.

Course Aims

The aims of the course are to:

professionalism: broaden students' understanding of professional ethics, legal and regulatory frameworks, and environmental standards in the design of architecture for rural towns, with an emphasis on inclusive, safe, and low-carbon design practice within interdisciplinary and collaborative contexts

design/create: broaden students' ability to develop environmentally and socially responsive design proposals at a town scale, addressing the environmental, cultural, socio-economic, and spatial challenges of designing multi-storey buildings within a rural town setting

research: broaden students' capacity to conduct environmentally focused design-led research, using site, climate, material, and energy data to inform sustainable, contextually relevant, and technically considered architectural proposals

communication: broaden a student's ability to communicate complex architectural and environmental strategies clearly and effectively both visually and verbally, and using a range of analogue and digital tools

skills: broaden a student's ability to apply and demonstrate communication and a clear methodology, with analogue and digital tools, in the production of architectural design proposals, including the simulation of energy use and environmental comfort

knowledge: deepen students' knowledge of environmental design strategies, architectural theory, and material systems, enabling the development of regenerative and resilient architecture that engages with rural-urban contexts for a changing climate

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the Course students will be able to **experiment with and demonstrate:**

professionalism: an understanding of professional ethics, environmental standards, and regulatory frameworks by incorporating inclusive, safe, and low-carbon design principles into coherent architectural proposals for a rural town context, within a collaborative and interdisciplinary design process

design/create: a creative and environmentally responsive design process to develop multi-storey architectural proposals that address the environmental, spatial, social, and cultural challenges of rural town settings

research: design-led research to analyse environmental, material, and contextual data, including climate, site conditions, and energy performance, to inform the development of technically and environmentally sound architectural proposals

communication: architectural and environmental strategies using a range of analogue and digital media, including verbal presentations, visual drawings, and environmental simulation outputs

skills: analogue and digital tools, including environmental analysis methods such as daylight modelling, thermal simulation, and lifecycle assessment, to iteratively test, refine, and present coherent architectural design proposals

knowledge: knowledge of environmental design strategies, architectural theory, and material systems, and apply this to the design of regenerative, contextually appropriate architecture within a rural town setting

Indicative Content

The rural context demands a broad understanding of the environmental, physical and societal issues specific to selected locations alongside the generic conditions of rural life. Set in the context of a rural town, this course enables students to explore the adaptive reuse of an existing public building as a vehicle for developing environmentally responsible and socially meaningful architecture. Students deepen their understanding of the interrelated environmental, physical, and societal issues specific to rural contexts, while addressing broader conditions of rural living and development.

During the course, students will:

- conduct research into the environmental, economic, and cultural dimensions of adaptive reuse in rural settings, focusing on the challenges and opportunities of low-carbon transformation.
- undertake fieldwork and desktop research to record, analyse, and evaluate the environmental and material performance of existing rural buildings and their context.
- develop spatial and programmatic strategies that respond to the site, brief, and rural town fabric, using a creative design process that integrates environmental data and performance targets.
- produce an architectural proposal for the reuse or extension of a public building, supported by design investigations into daylighting, thermal comfort, material choice, environmental impact, and user needs.

- apply environmental analysis tools, including daylight modelling, thermal simulation, and lifecycle assessment, alongside analogue drawing and model-making to iteratively test and refine design strategies
- work collaboratively in groups of varying sizes to generate and communicate architectural ideas, practicing inclusive and interdisciplinary working methods.
- present design proposals at multiple stages of development to a range of audiences using visual, verbal, and digital communication

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 competencies. Integration of the six learning domains enables design work to be grounded in specialist subject areas, Architectural Technology/ HAUS/ Professional Studio, and enacted through design projects. The course is intended to broaden students' development of iterative and reflective design practices while broadening their critical, ethical and professional position within architectural practice. Student learning is developed through the course, supported by staff and student field trips, which enable students to address real-world issues in the context of specific communities and places. Groupwork and collaboration are core to the student learning experience, enabling students to both work productively with others while contextualising the role of the architect in relation to other disciplines and practices. Studio tutors 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, design reviews, seminars, workshops and lectures by staff and invited guests. Design forums offer the opportunity for critical discourse around issues raised by the studio project, enabling staff and students to enter into a dialogue around contemporary architectural issues. A hybrid approach to learning through in-person and on-line delivery offers students access to flexible and inclusive learning. Private study consists of both staff-directed study and independent student-directed study.

Timetable:

Studio tutorials are delivered on a weekly basis either in groups or individually with pin-up tutorials and design reviews at set points throughout the session concluding with design forums at the end of the projects.

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	Notional Learning Hours
30	300

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Formative feedback is delivered during the course, offering students the opportunity to obtain ongoing staff and peer feedback through presentation, discussion and review of design projects.

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. During the academic session staff deliver assessment workshops with students, clarifying both the Formative and Summative assessment processes delivered within the Programme.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is generally undertaken at the end of the course. Students' work is assessed against the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each course, which are aligned with the professional competencies required for architectural practice.

Summative assessment in studio courses is undertaken through coursework assignments in the form of studio design projects. Coursework assignment submissions involve visual and text-based submissions utilising both digital and physical tools and formats. Students are supported in preparing their submissions with feedback and provided with example submissions. 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.

During the academic session, staff deliver assessment workshops with students, clarifying the assessment process delivered within the Programme.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Portfolio Students are required to submit a digital Portfolio of their studio design work for assessment	100%	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.