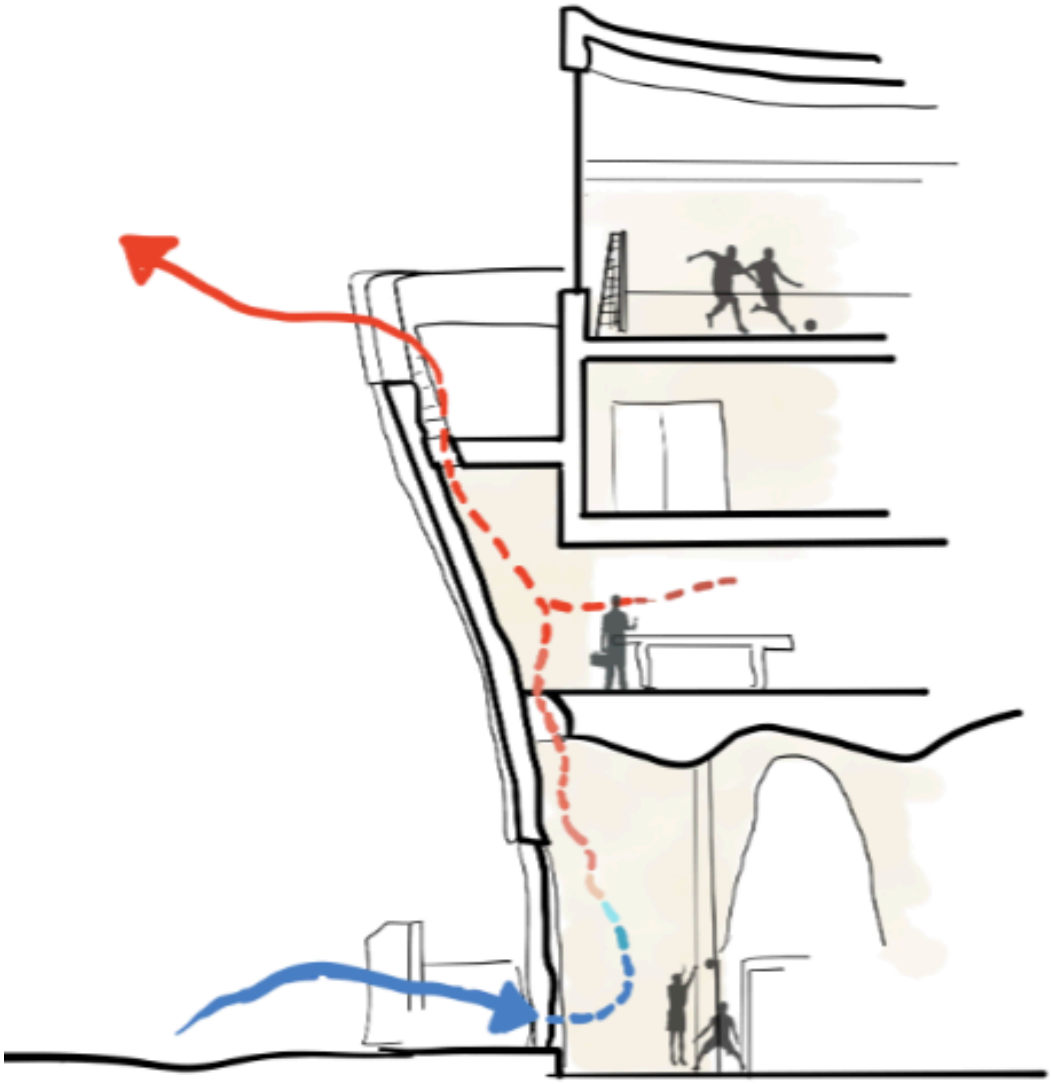
Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Studio Work 4 Environmental Architecture



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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
TBC	100122/100583	2026-27

Course Title	Studio Work 4 Environmental Architecture
Course Contact	

Credits	60
SCQF Level	Level 10
When Taught	Semester 1 and 2

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

Course Introduction

The Studio Work 4 Environmental Architecture course focuses on the evolving relationship between architecture, the city, and the environment, using Glasgow as a dynamic model for urban investigation. This course is designed to consolidate students' abilities to create environmentally responsive, technically robust, and socially engaged design proposals, while deepening their understanding of the urban condition and refining their critical and methodological approach to architectural design.

The course integrates advanced environmental analysis into the design process, positioning performance metrics such as energy use, daylighting, and embodied carbon not as constraints but as creative drivers of architectural form and experience. Students are encouraged to use environmental data to iteratively test, refine, and communicate the impact of their design decisions across multiple scales.

Two principal studio projects, Urban Housing and Urban Building**,** provide a platform for students to explore architecture in relation to Glasgow's complex physical, social, cultural, and climatic context. These projects enable students to examine the spatial and material fabric of the city while applying regenerative design strategies that address pressing environmental challenges.

Throughout the course, students are supported through individual and group tutorials, site visits, guest talks, and technical workshops. Emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary collaboration and peer learning, with formative feedback and review processes embedded at each design stage.

The Studio Work 4/Environmental course aligns with the Architectural Technology 4 course, allowing students to integrate specialist technical knowledge, including energy simulation, thermal comfort analysis, material lifecycle evaluation into their design propositions.

Course Aims

The aims of the course are to:

professional: refine a student's ability to apply knowledge of professional behaviours within the context of environmentally responsible design, enabling them to define and articulate an individual architectural position through complex, climate-conscious architectural proposals

design/create: refine a student's ability to use a creative design process to develop complex urban architectural proposals that address environmental performance, spatial quality, and social engagement within the city.

research: refine students' capacity to use advanced design-led research skills, including environmental analysis and performance simulation to inform, test, and communicate a range of complex, architectural design proposals.

communication: refine students' ability to visually and verbally communicate sophisticated architectural ideas using a wide range of advanced analogue and digital media, including environmental data and modelling outputs, in support of complex urban design proposals.

skills: refine students' use of analogue and digital tools, such as energy simulation, thermal comfort analysis, daylighting, and material lifecycle assessment, through a clear and rigorous methodology that supports the development of technically robust and environmentally informed architectural proposals.

knowledge: refine a student's ability to use architectural theories, concepts, and techniques to address social, ethical and climate change challenges in the production of a range of complex architectural design proposals

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

professionalism: professional behaviours and ethics in the context of environmentally responsible urban propositions, demonstrating an individually defined architectural position through complex, climate-conscious proposals that address collaborative, and sustainable design principles

design/create: a creative and iterative design process in the development of complex urban architectural proposals that integrate environmental performance, spatial quality, and social

responsiveness in relation to the context of Glasgow

research: advanced design-led research skills, including environmental analysis, simulation, and performance evaluation in the production of architectural design proposals in response to urban ecological and social challenges

communication: the ability to visually and verbally communicate complex architectural ideas and environmental data, supporting a clear design narrative within an urban context

skills: a rigorous design methodology that integrates analogue and digital tools such as energy simulation, thermal comfort analysis, daylighting studies, and lifecycle assessment, applied to the development of technically and environmentally informed architectural proposals

knowledge: a knowledge of architectural theories, concepts, and techniques used to critically address climate change, social justice, and ethical responsibility through a range of complex architectural proposals situated in an urban context

Indicative Content

The course supports students to appraise, integrate and articulate their prior architectural and educational experiences to develop a rigorous and iterative design methodology. Through studio conversations and design-led research, students engage with the complexities of contemporary architectural practice in dialogue with the urban, social, and environmental context of Glasgow.

In Semester 1, the course begins with urban analysis and research aligned to a studio theme that advocates for retrofit-first, regenerative, and sustainable design approaches. The investigation is grounded in the material and constructed fabric of the city, considering not only the historical evolution of urban design but also the craft and culture of making. Students explore a wide range of environmental and ethical concerns including biodiversity, amenity, circular economy, material cultures, and the intersections between social sustainability, social justice, and environmental responsibility.

Students collaboratively and individually integrate design-led and environmental research, employing analogue and digital tools, such as environmental simulation and lifecycle analysis to develop strategic urban proposals. These are tested at multiple scales and critically evaluated for their impact on urban quality, resource use, and embodied carbon.

In Semester 2, students develop a public building proposal that builds on their individual research and reflects a personal architectural position grounded in collective experience, belonging, and social value. The design process involves environmental performance analysis, architectural technology integration, and a critical assessment of comfort, health, safety, and privacy, leading

to robust proposals that address the ethical, spatial, and ecological implications of urban architectural design.

During the course, students will:

- demonstrate professionalism by developing ethical, inclusive, and environmentally responsible urban design propositions that reflect a personal critical architectural position
- create complex and climate-conscious architectural proposals using an iterative design process that integrates spatial quality, social responsiveness, and environmental performance within the context of Glasgow
- undertake advanced, design-led research, and performance evaluation to inform and test regenerative design strategies
- communicate complex architectural ideas and performance data effectively through advanced analogue and digital media, contributing to clear, critical design narratives
- apply rigorous methodological tools, including energy and comfort simulations and lifecycle assessment to develop technically and environmentally informed design proposals

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, History and Theory and Professional Studio, and enacted through design projects. The course is intended to develop students' command of iterative and reflective design practices while defining 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 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 projects, enabling staff and students to enter a dialogue around contemporary architectural issues A hybrid approach to learning through in-person and on-line support 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
60	600

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods
Formative activities are provided during the course, offering students the opportunity to obtain ongoing staff and peer feedback through presentation, discussion, and review of design projects. This course is taught over two semesters, as such formative work will be marked with an indicative grade and feedback will be given at an appropriate mid-way point. Written feedback will be provided via Canvas. Formative assessment and 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 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. 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
Students are required to submit their studio work for assessment through presentation of selected visual and physical artefacts such as drawings, text and/or models, supported by a digital portfolio with both submissions assessed together against the course ILO's with one final course grade awarded.	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.