

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification  
Course Title: Academic Skills for Master's Research**



*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 2026-27 Academic Year.*

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
PCXS104		2026-27

<b>Course Title</b>	Academic Skills for Master's Research
<b>Course Contact</b>	Daisy Abbott

<b>Credits</b>	20
<b>SCQF Level</b>	11
<b>When Taught</b>	Semester 1

<b>Associated Programmes</b>	MSc Medical Visualisation and Human Anatomy MSc Heritage Visualisation MSc Serious Games and Virtual Reality
<b>Lead School</b>	School of Innovation and Technology
<b>Other Schools</b>	N/A
<b>Date of Approval</b>	PACAAG August 2025

#### Course Introduction

This course introduces students to a range of core research skills including: literature search and review; formulating research questions; critical writing; research methods; and ethics. The ways in which postgraduate study differs from undergraduate – and the significance of academic research to this distinction – will be explored.

The course provides an advanced understanding of issues related to the academic research process that will facilitate the development of students' ability to identify and utilise appropriate methodological and theoretical frameworks to support and manage their master's projects. By the end of this course students should be better prepared and equipped to investigate potential projects and should be able to take a structured approach to research topics and specialist areas.

#### Course Aims

Academic Skills for Master's Research aims to:

- Provide students with opportunities to critically develop disciplinary research methods, expertise, and confidence;
- Enable students to autonomously design their own research project/practice with a critical grounding in appropriate research methods both relevant to their disciplinary specialization and, where relevant, enabling of trans-, multi-, or inter-disciplinarity;
- Provide students with a rigorous understanding of research ethics as relevant to their research / practice;
- Facilitate critical reflection on the relationships between forms of research and modes of practice in order to encourage robust and /or innovative applications of existing methods.

#### Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Design and develop a research proposal relevant to their studies / practice;
- Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of relevant research methods;
- Identify and curate appropriate sources to inform research design and implementation;
- Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of research ethics for their subject area;
- Communicate, through a relevant medium, how research can be applied in academic and/or professional contexts.

#### **Indicative Content**

- Introducing research skills for postgraduate students
- Understanding research resources
- Finding and managing information
- Reviewing, synthesising and critically analysing research context
- Conceptualising a research question
- Developing and managing a project of research:
  - Use and critical appraisal of sources
  - Communication and presentation
  - Literature review
  - Research methodologies and methods
- Disseminating research outcomes
- Research ethics

#### **Description of Learning and Teaching Methods**

The normal timetable will be for weekly classes of 2 hours.

Delivery by course leader or tutor, with support by teaching assistants(s) (1-3 sessions) and other academic staff (1-2 sessions)

Each week is typically structured as a set of asynchronous, online preparation material (usually video lectures, under 1 hour total) which students should watch and study in advance, followed by an in-studio seminar, tutorial, or workshop to reinforce the material, followed by structured independent learning activities, which includes assignment preparation.

<b>Indicative Contact Hours</b>	<b>Notional Learning Hours</b>
22	200

#### **Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods**

Formal Formative Assessment takes place in week 4 and week 6. Week 4 takes the form of a reflective annotated bibliography of a selection of relevant literature. Week 6 takes the form of a short (5 minute) presentation on an idea for a research question or case study of research in practice.

Feedback is given via canvas as a comment and/or rubric and indicates where the student is meeting expectations and/or can improve. Presentations are also peer reviewed.

Informal formative feedback is through discussion and participation in class activities, and in tutor support for submissions.

#### **Description of Summative Assessment arrangements**

Comprehension of lecture material is assessed through short multiple-choice tests at key points during the course. In addition to this, students will be required to submit assignments that contextualise and propose a research idea which they consider to be at the cutting edge of their field of enquiry.

Course assessment will be through two short MCQ class tests and a portfolio of short written coursework (see below assessment tasks), including a Master's project proposal, which will prepare students for their Master's project (and thesis).

Assessment task 1: MCQ class tests, 20% weighting, assessing comprehension of course material  
 Assessment task 2: Literature review draft with sample of critical writing c.800-1000 words. 30% weighting

Assessment task 3: A draft Master's project proposal including research context, design, and consideration of ethics, c. 1500-2000 words, 50% weighting. This provides practice in preparing a project proposal, and students may choose to pursue a different project in their actual research project.

#### Assessment Criteria

Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to:

- conceptualise and present a research problem;
- utilise appropriate methods and tools when planning a research project;
- situate their projects of research within a research context;
- critically reflect on the success and effectiveness of their own projects of practice and research;
- demonstrate a level of depth in the analysis of literature, artefacts, technical solutions, practitioners, ideas, concepts and/or debates appropriate to postgraduate level.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
MCQ Tests	20	Week 7, week 11
Literature review draft ~800-1000 words	30	Week 13
Master's research project proposal ~1500-2000 words	50	Week 13

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
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
The full reading and resource list is available online here: <a href="#">Resource Lists</a>
The following list highlights some of the core and key resources: <b>Key reading:</b> Biggam, J. (2014). <i>Succeeding With Your Master's Dissertation: A Step-By-Step Handbook: A Step-by-Step Handbook, 4th Edition</i> . McGraw-Hill International.

**Additional resources:**

Bowell, Tracy; Kemp, Gary (2015) *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide*

Brown, Leslie Allison, Strega, Susan (2015) *Research as resistance : revisiting critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches, Second edition*. Canadian Scholars' Press

Creswell, John W. (2014) *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches , Fourth edition*. SAGE

Hanscomb, Stuart (2017) *Critical thinking: the basics*

Moore, Nick (2015) *How to Do Research: A practical guide to designing and managing research projects*. Facet Publishing 2015

Walliman, Nicholas (2005) *Your research project : a step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher , 2nd ed*. SAGE