

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Advancing Practice (Combined Practice and Thesis)**



Credit: Pauline Barbier 2021

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
		2026-27

Course Title	Advancing Practice (Combined Practice and Thesis)
Course Contact	Kirsty Ross

Credits	80
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Stage 5, Semester 1 & 2

Associated Programmes	BDes/MEDes Product Design
Lead School	School of Innovation & Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval February 2024

Course Introduction

This course encourages students to reflect and draw upon their educational experiences to develop an individual design practice that can be applied to a variety of cultural and societal contexts.

The learning experience gives students the opportunity to test out and explore their own practice with creative autonomy, through the development of a large-scale, self-directed design project that incorporates a theoretical and critical written component.

The course comprises of two elements, the written thesis and the combined design practice element. It is structured around the student identifying their own area of interest with supervisory support, articulating this as an appropriate brief based upon research, and resolving this as a proposition that can be communicated via a 'Viva' style presentation and a written thesis.

Course Aims

This course provides students with the opportunity to:

- Build upon your educational experiences to develop and express an individual design perspective in response to contemporary life and wider society.
- Utilise theoretical and practical design skills and competencies within a self-directed project to explore a theme or topic of personal interest.
- Develop confidence in the articulation, reflection, and evaluation of design practice, outcomes, and the thinking that underpins these.
- Achieve a coherent and compelling level of production, communication, and presentation of a body of work.
- Demonstrate an intentional relationship between a written element, research, and designed outcomes.
- Present a formal piece of writing commensurate with the conventions applicable to a written thesis.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

- Generate insights and hypotheses from social, contextual and theoretical research on a chosen topic, through design practice and a written thesis.
- Apply multiple research methods to engage with diverse communities and stakeholders.
- Apply conceptual and semantic refinement to the resolution of a collective body of work derived from contextual and theoretical research of the chosen topic.
- Communicate the creation of new knowledge and value through the delivery of a self-directed project.
- Apply the core principles of critical writing and discourse in the generation of a written thesis.

Indicative Content

This course covers the following content:

- Academic writing
- Advanced research practice
- Exhibition and curatorial practice
- Engagement with a range of audiences and stakeholders
- Project management
- Viva presentation and assessment

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

In this course, students will be expected to increasingly take significant responsibility for the management of their learning. Emphasis will be placed on the gradual encouraging of self-reliance and personal academic development.

This course is designed as a practice-based experience which supports students in their introduction to studio-based learning and practice. This is further supported by TSD (Technical Services Department), who provide workshop and material-based learning.

The principal teaching strategies employed on this course are:

Review (group and individual) - enables the development of key presentation skills and encourages students to receive and give constructive feedback regarding each other's work, and an opportunity to debate project input. These may be tutor-led, tutor-facilitated, or peer-led allowing students to fully explore all aspects of practical submissions within a reflective discursive framework.

Presentation (visual and verbal) - an important learning device used to generate peer debate regarding the generation, development or overall success of concepts, and their practical realisation within the context of a project brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers, tutors and stakeholders when relevant through appropriate visual and verbal means (including: models or mock-ups, portfolios, videos, slideshows, etc.).

Workshops - are practice-based sessions aimed at supporting students to develop key skills to support project development.

Self-Directed Learning - self-directed study emphasises the importance of autonomy, reflection upon personal learning and project work within an individual and/or a collaborative environment.

Guest Speaker sessions (when relevant) – include input from visiting lecturers/guests from industry and academic staff enabling students access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial context. Talks arranged at the School of Innovation and Technology are often open to all students regardless of year group or programme.

Lectures and seminars - often used to introduce key knowledge to support practical work project development, to disseminate theoretical, methodological, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues related to each course which can be used to underpin practical studio work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials, studio sessions or further enquiry in self- directed learning or research.

This course is supported by a virtual learning environment tool (Canvas) for the dissemination, discussion and access to relevant course information, and signpost to other relevant teaching and learning platforms used by GSA.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
80	800

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Students are supported in their learning through a range of formative assessment activities that enable students to reflect on their learning as they progress through the course. This includes:

- Regular feedback from tutors through engagement in individual and group tutorials, reviews and presentations
- Class discussion and peer input

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is designed to support students to reflect upon their learning on completion of a course. It provides an evaluation of progress made and the level of achievement identifiable in the work submitted.

Following an assessment presentation, students will submit a body of work for assessment. Grades will be awarded using the GSA marking scheme following/adhering to the assessment regulations in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Annotated portfolio: Students are required to submit an annotated portfolio of work (2D & 3D) that responds to a self-directed project and that includes the prescribed deliverables in the form of an exhibition and viva presentation.	60	Week 12, Semester 2
Written Thesis	40	Week 10, Semester 2

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	N/A

Reading and On-line Resources

An on-line resource list will be provided to students at the start of the course. This will be reviewed annually to remain relevant and current for the course and subject specialism. On this course students will also define their own resources as pertinent to their area of research alongside an indicative list of shared resources which is accessible via [Resource Lists](#).