

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Core Research Methods: People and Context**

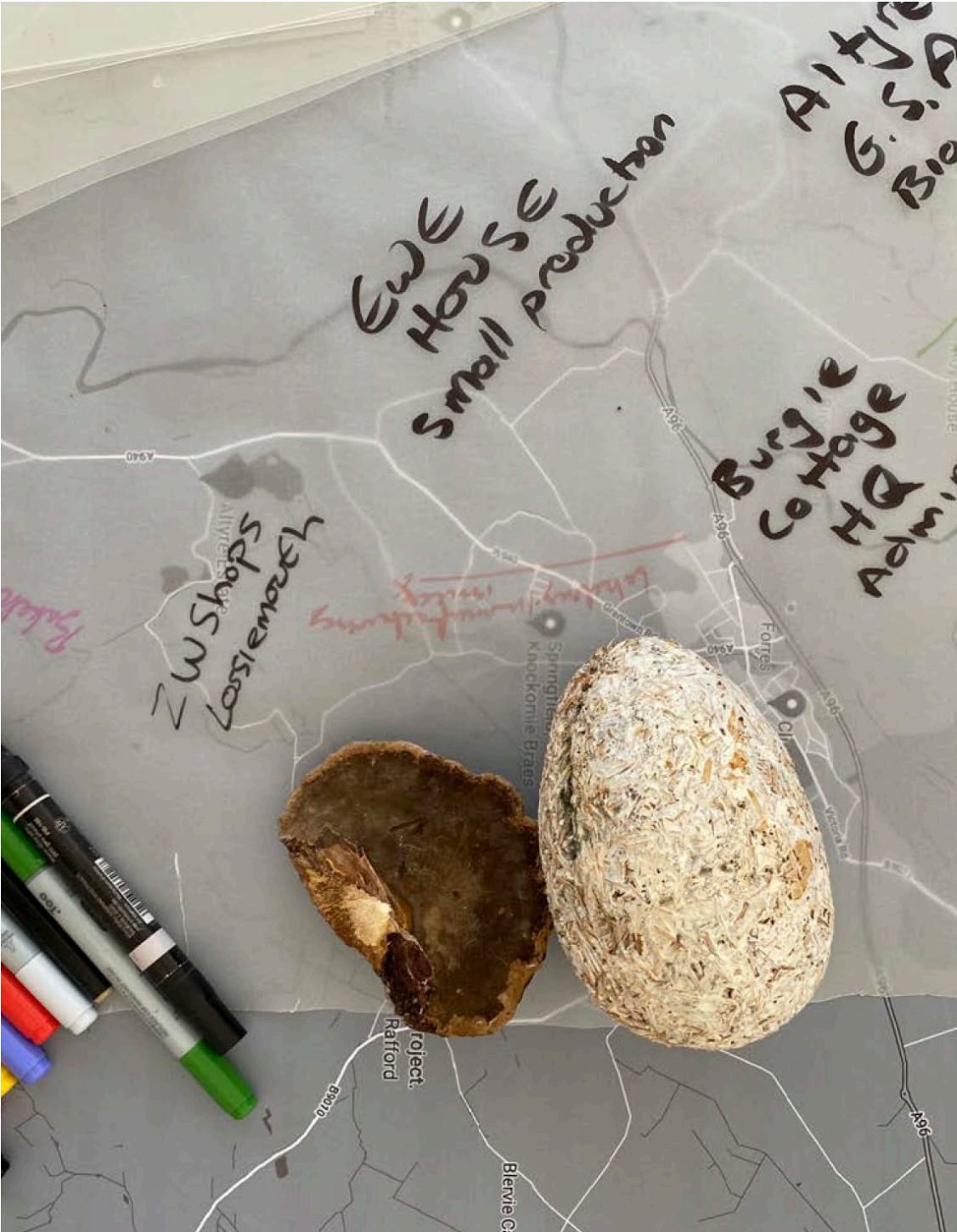


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Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
PCXS107		2026-27

Course Title	Core Research Methods: People and Context
Course Contact	Dr. Iain Reid, Dr. Mafalda Moreira, Dr Albert Fuster

Credits	20
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Semester 1

Associated Programmes	M.Des in Design Innovation and Circular Economy M.Des in Design Innovation and Citizenship M.Des in Design Innovation and Environmental Design M.Des in Design Innovation and Future Heritage M.Des in Design Innovation and Interaction Design M.Des in Design Innovation and Service Design M.Des in Design Innovation and Transformation Design
Lead School	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	PACAAG August 2025

Course Introduction
<p>This course offers foundational knowledge of core research methods relevant to the field of Design Innovation, contributing to seed and strengthen the reflective, critical and academic discourse abilities of students. These are particularly relevant to the practice-based courses of this programme (such as Studio 1 and Studio 2 specialism projects) as students' projects are research-based and data driven. Students are expected to apply and expand the academic skills and knowledge acquired in this course in their final Masters Research Project.</p> <p>This course introduces a range of theoretical, philosophical, and practical debates and concerns relevant to the conducting qualitative research within the field of design innovation, including highlighting links between theory and practice; emphasising the importance of ethics in practice; and conducting research that is led by engagements with people and contexts.</p>

Course Aims
<p>The course aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide students with an opportunity to critically develop disciplinary knowledge on research methods with the introduction of relevant philosophical and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the field of design innovation; 2. 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; 3. Provide an in-depth, structural outline of a wide range relevant research methods and techniques, as well as enable critical reflection on the relationship between research and practice.

4. Provide students with a rigorous understanding of research ethics in the practice of design innovation, as well as opportunities to develop reflexive skills.
5. Introduce a range of communication strategies within design innovation research, as well as highlight the significance of each.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. Demonstrate critical knowledge of relevant philosophical and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the field of design innovation;
2. Critically discuss research methods and techniques relevant to the practice of design innovation, including examples linking theory and practice;
3. Demonstrate an appreciation and negotiation of the role of ethics in design innovation research;
4. Communicate the value of applying design innovation research methods and techniques.

Indicative Content

This course invites students to explore relevant philosophical and theoretical domains related to design innovation to support qualitative approaches and methods for engagement with people and context. Course themes include:

- Methodologies of practice-based and practice-led research,
- Secondary research methods to conduct reviews of practice and literature,
- Engagement methods and the framing of design experiments,
- Applied ethics when conducting research, fieldwork, and modes of analysis.
- Communication of research, including textual, visual and artefactual, as well as the possible links which may be drawn between each.

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

This course is mainly delivered through lectures and seminars, tutorials, and when relevant guest speakers will contribute with their expertise in relation to design innovation methods.

Lectures and seminars - disseminate theoretical, methodological, contextual and historical knowledge 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.

Tutorials - designed to provide academic support through individual or group meetings with staff to discuss the different directions and aspects of course-based activities.

Guest Speaker sessions – include input from visiting lecturers, guests from industry and research staff enabling students access to, and understanding of, relevant contemporary practice, research and commercial context.

The course uses Canvas, a virtual learning environment tool, 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
24	200

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Formative feedback is an ongoing process undertaken through reviews and tutorial sessions. At a mid-way point in the course, students submit a formal presentation of their work in progress. Written feedback will be provided on how best to improve and build upon existing work to date. Students who appear to be at risk of failure will be offered individual tutorials as appropriate to provide targeted support.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Students will receive a research brief inviting them to critically explore one or more themes of the course and will be asked to submit a written piece of work in the form of either an Annotated Portfolio or an Essay. Written feedback will be provided to students.

Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment. Reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course are outlined in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Portfolio: An annotated portfolio of research material, including a reflective and contextualising written component of a 1000-words. (this submission should use a consistent referencing system)	100	12
Or		
Essay: A 3500-words piece of referenced academic work exploring a methodology and associated methods. (this submission should include visual material, e.g., diagrams and mappings, as well as a consistent referencing system)	100	12

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	N/A

Reading and On-line Resources

The course indicative Reading and on-line resource list is accessible via [Resource Lists](#). This list will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.