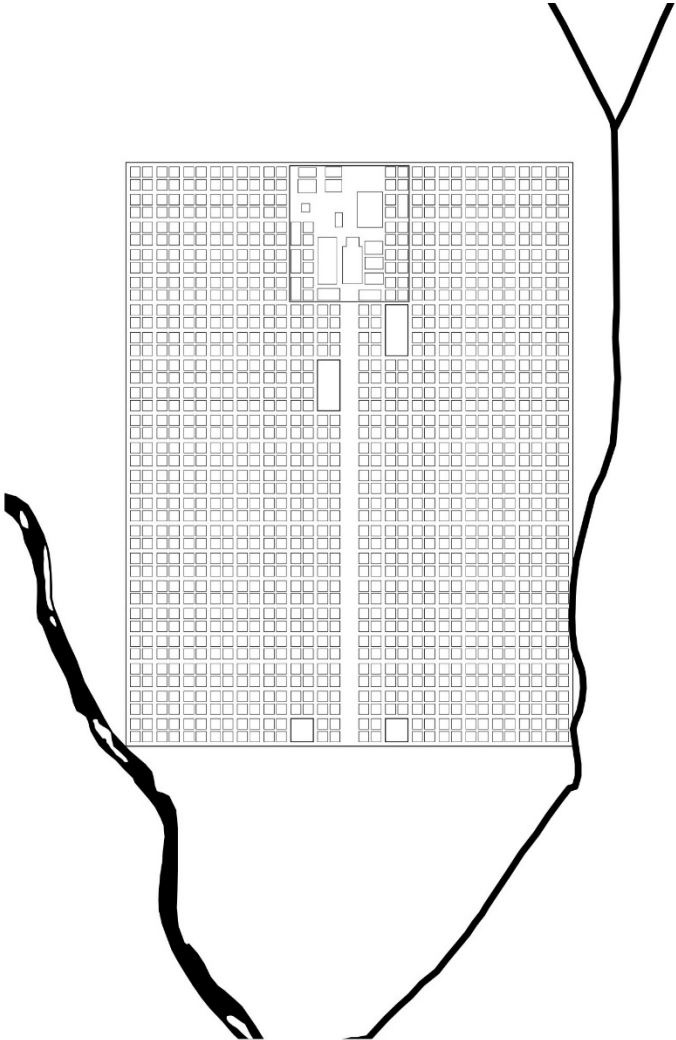


**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Master of Architecture (by Conversion)- Specialist
Study**



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	Specialist Study: Master of Architecture (by Conversion)
Course Contact	Isabel Deakin

Credits	60
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Semester 1

Associated Programmes	Master of Architecture (by Conversion)
Lead School	Mackintosh School of Architecture
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval March 2024

Course Introduction

The Specialist Study course extends design, organisational and research skills within a rigorous creative studio environment and provides the opportunity to develop work at a postgraduate level. The investigative studies, research, critical thinking, methodologies and design outputs developed throughout Stage 5 offer a foundation for this further exploration into an aspect or theme identified within the Final Design Thesis, Architectural Technology 5 or Professional Studio 5 coursework.

The Specialist Study is a supervised independent research project, with students responsible for determining their own project aims and objectives and provides the opportunity to further extend their individual architectural interest beyond the work undertaken in Stage 5. The course aims to enhance students' critical, reflective and speculative research methodology and students should clearly evidence the collection, analysis and synthesis of this further research through a body of work. Students are expected to operate with professionalism, self-direction and manage their own time on this substantial research project.

Students are taught through a combination of group and individual tutorials. Through formative feedback, peer reviews, and design reviews students apply their learning on the course. This is evidenced in the summative submission of the Specialist Study, demonstrating the collection, organisation, analysis, synthesis of research and resultant research led output. The Course is accompanied by a selection of texts supporting the wider architectural discourse.

This output is designed to allow students to evidence their command of design and research processes at a Postgraduate Level, and to highlight the student's abilities and behaviours beyond the core competencies for the RIBA/ ARB Part 2 examination.

Course Aims

The aims of the course are to:

professionalism: facilitate a student's command of knowledge of professional ethics in terms of collaborative, inclusive, sustainable and safe design principles evidenced through a refined research question and research led output

design/create: facilitate a student's command to use a creative design process in the production of a self-directed research led output

research: facilitate a student's command of advanced research skills in the production of a self-directed research led output

communication: facilitate a student's command of the integration of analogue and digital media to visually and verbally communicate structured thinking evidenced in a self-directed research led output

skills: facilitate a student's command of critical reflection, communication and a structured methodology, with analogue and digital tools, to produce a self-directed research led output

knowledge: facilitate a student's command of the creative use of advanced architectural theories, concepts, and techniques to address social, ethical and climate change challenges to produce a self-directed research led output

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the Course, students will be able to **synthesise, speculate and articulate:**

Professionalism: professional ethics in terms of collaborative, inclusive, sustainable and safe design principles to a refined research question evidenced through the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Design/Create: a creative design process with a refined well identified research question and the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Research: advanced research skills in the production of a refined research question evidenced through the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Communication: the integration of analogue and digital media to visually and verbally communicate structured thinking to a refined research question evidenced through the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Skills: critical reflection, communication and a structured methodology, with digital and analogue tools, in the production of a response to a refined research question evidenced through the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Knowledge: the creative use of advanced knowledge of architectural theories, concepts, and techniques to address social, ethical and environmental challenges to respond to a refined research question evidenced through the production of an advanced research led output, in the context of their Stage 5 studies

Indicative Content

The Specialist Study course is designed to give students the opportunity to advance their individual architectural interests in the context of an area of interest identified through their Stage 5 studies in either the Final Design Thesis, Architectural Technology or Professional Studio. The Specialist Study is a self-directed piece of work and provides an opportunity to refine a self-directed research question and to further pursue and find expression for personal architectural interests and preoccupations.

The Specialist Study aims to enhance a student's critical, reflective and speculative research methodology which should clearly evidence the collection, analysis and synthesis of data, out of which an intellectual position has been theorized and supported a body of work. Students are expected to operate with professionalism, and self-direction in preparation for the start of their architectural career.

Through the Specialist Study, students are able to synthesise, speculate and articulate their individual professional, research, communication and design knowledge and skills through a self-directed research led output.

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/ Professional Studio, and used as a basis for the Specialist Study. The course is intended to develop a student's command of iterative and reflective research practices while deploying their critical, ethical and professional position as an architect and designer. Student learning is developed through the course, supported by staff 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. Part-time studio tutors along with visiting guests offer students insights into the constantly changing world of architectural practice. Independent learning is fostered throughout the course.

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 supplementary lectures by staff and invited guests. The Design forum offers the opportunity for critical discourse around issues raised by the Specialist Study, enabling staff and students to enter into a dialogue addressing contemporary architectural issues.

A hybrid approach to learning through in-person and on-line delivery supports students through access to flexible and inclusive learning resources. Private study consists of both staff-directed study and independent student-directed study.

Timetable:

Studio tutorials are delivered on a regular 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

60

Notional Learning Hours

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 their project.

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.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is undertaken at the end of the course and is designed and delivered to support student learning through evaluation of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each course, aligned with the professional competencies required for architectural practice. Summative assessment in this course is undertaken through a self-selected specialist study, involving 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
<p>Design Led Submission Students are required to submit a Portfolio of work which will be holistically assessed. The Portfolio will incorporate the presentation of the Specialist Study supported by a contextualising statement (500 words), curated physical exhibition and illustrated Design Report (2000 words).</p>	100%	Semester 1 Week 12
<p>OR</p>		
<p>Written Submission Students are required to submit a Portfolio of work which will be holistically assessed. The Portfolio will incorporate the presentation of the Specialist Study through a written dissertation (10,000 words) and a Summary Poster and contextualising statement (500 words).</p>	100%	Semester 1 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.