

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Studio 1 – Design Innovation Practice**



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
PDIN108		2026-27

Course Title	Studio 1 - Design Innovation Practice
Course Contact	Dr. Iain Reid, Dr. Albert Fuster

Credits	40
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 2026

Course Introduction

This course provides a non-prescriptive introduction to the practices and mindsets associated with Design Innovation contributing to the development of core disciplinary knowledge and skills before diversifying into a chosen specialism. The complexity of contemporary life is explored in this course towards the development of future-oriented proposals that can contribute to the meaningful change/creation of future experience.

Students from a broad range of academic and professional backgrounds will engage with key texts and disciplinary discussions and core elements of project processes including engagement with people and contexts associated to particular project briefs. Students will also be introduced to ethics and reflective practices to support their project work and prepare them for an academic journey through the specialism in Stage 2 towards a final Research Project in Stage 3.

Course Aims

This course aims to:

1. Introduce the theory and practice of Design Innovation as an approach to thinking about the world we live in and developing responses to complex contexts where we wish to implement positive change for future experience.
2. Facilitate collaborative working approaches to be utilised in differing organisational, social and cultural contexts.
3. Convey the value of the tools, methods and mindset of Design Innovation within specific knowledge and practice domains through project work, discussion, workshops, seminars and other studio-based activity.

4. Foster critical debate regarding contemporary design practice and its theoretical and ethical basis through critical reflection upon the practice of others

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of global challenges and its place specific implications for people and planet through primary and secondary research.
2. Apply appropriate design research methods to explore and interpret project contexts and themes.
3. Develop and iterate innovative and appropriate proposals to address identified demands, constraints or opportunities within a given context.
4. Critically reflect on engagements with a diversity of project actors (individuals, organisations, peers and faculty) and its ethics responding to project activities
5. Communicate to professional standards project insights, project proposals and their potential wider impact in response to identified demands, constraints or opportunities within a given context.

Indicative Content

This course introduces the methods, tools and theories of design innovation as contemporary practice. It marries practical application within the context of design project work to its discussion and critique within the theoretical framework of contemporary society and the complexities and demands that arise there.

- Design Innovation as a project process applied to various contexts.
- Relationship of design theory to practice.
- Reflexive approach to practice including ethics and positionality
- Project management and delivery.

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

The principal teaching strategies employed in this practice-based course are:

Lectures and seminars - used 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.

Studio Sessions/workshops - practical classes in which ideas from lectures and seminars may be tested out, or new concepts introduced and explored. These may range from IT sessions in which students are introduced to particular pieces of software, to practical modelling classes in which prototypes are designed and iterated, alternatively they can be “masterclasses” in which leading academics or industry figures introduce cutting edge theory or practice to students. Depending on the focus of the workshop, students may work independently or in groups.

Critiques/Presentations - 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 or contextual partners through appropriate visual and verbal means (including: models or mock-ups, portfolios, videos, slideshows, etc.). The crit enables the development of key presentation skills, and encourages students to 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.

Tutorials - designed to provide academic support through individual or group meetings with staff to discuss the different directions and aspects of projects or course-based activities as well as progress on the programme/course overall.

Self-Directed Learning and Research - in line with other taught postgraduate programmes at GSA, significant emphasis in the Design Innovation programme is placed on self-directed study, from project design and development, to gaining theoretical knowledge through traditional research methods. This emphasises autonomy, reflection upon personal learning and self-directed project work within an individual and a collaborative environment.

Guest Speaker sessions (when relevant) – 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. Guests often include seasoned industry, authors of design literature and professionals from our global alumni community to aid students in developing their own professional practice and prepare for employment, contributing with expert knowledge to the course through the sharing of knowledge, professional paths, case studies, projects, and where practical and applicable will offer critical input to ongoing project work.

Canvas – 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.

Delivery methods like lectures and seminars intend to help students initiate their own investigation of topics to support both the core project brief, and their personal interests which, in turn, may be used as the basis for their self-initiated Stage Three project.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
40	400

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Formative feedback is an ongoing process undertaken through reviews and tutorials with staff.

As part of studio-based learning, regular contact with tutors provides students continuous and detailed feedback on their work. Students submit a formal presentation of their work at a mid-way point in the course. Tutors offer oral feedback on how best to improve and build upon existing work to date with the support of peer note-taking to expand upon and consolidate the received feedback.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

In this course, summative assessment is designed to replicate professional practices associated with design innovation projects. Students are supported in developing skills in a range of appropriate research and development methods, and in a collaborative group work setting.

Summative assessment has two components as set out below: one group submission and one individual submission. The presentation results in a single group grade. The project document results in an individual grade for each student. Students are awarded an aggregate grade based on the weighted grades of the two components, and are not required to pass both separately for the award of credit. Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment. Collaboration and teamwork are key to the practice of Design Innovation. Therefore, in Stage 1, Studio 1, there is an emphasis on developing and evidencing the foundations of these skills, and this is reflected in the increased weighting of the group presentation assessment component of this course.

Written feedback will be given.

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
Presentation of project Outcome (group): presentation to faculty and peers of a project outcome, it's rationale and expected impact in the explored context, with supporting materials when applicable.	60	12
Project Document (individual): 3,000-4,000 word visual document offering a reflective, evidenced and critical narrative of project process, decisions and outcomes. There should be a clearly identified response to the context within the brief based on research and analysis. This document should include text-based and visual elements including sketchbook-evidence of an iterative creative process.	40	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.