**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification**
**Course Title: Applied Research Skills**

*Please note that this specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the academic year*.

| Course Code | HECOS Code | Academic Session |
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| | | 2027-28 |

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| **Course Title** | Applied Research Skills |
| **Course Contact** | Duncan MacLeod, Head of Postgraduate Research |

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| **Credits** | 20 |
| **SCQF Level** | 11 |
| **When Taught** | Semester 1 |

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| **Associated Programmes** | Master of Research (MRes) |
| **Lead School** | Research |
| **Other Schools** | Mackintosh School of Architecture<br>School of Design<br>School of Fine Art<br>School of Innovation and Technology |
| **Date of Approval** | Programme Approval October 2026 |

**Course Introduction**

Applied Research Skills supports students in developing research knowledge and skills relevant to their discipline, practice and area of enquiry.

Students undertake a focused programme of research activity supported by disciplinary supervision, cross-disciplinary seminars and, where appropriate, researcher development training offered by GSA. Rather than prescribing a common set of research methods, the course enables each student to identify, test and critically evaluate approaches appropriate to their own field, practice and proposed research. Research activity may take the form of a bounded methodological exercise, pilot, prototype, experiment, practice-based enquiry or equivalent activity appropriate to the student's disciplinary context.

The nature and form of the research activity will vary according to the student's area of enquiry and developmental needs. The course enables students to identify, apply and critically reflect upon relevant research approaches, methods and processes, and to consider their relationship to disciplinary contexts, ethics and practice.

The work undertaken may inform a subsequent Independent Research Project or contribute to the student's wider academic, creative or professional research. The course is available to students studying on campus and by distance learning, with shared teaching activities supported through hybrid delivery and complemented by asynchronous online resources.

**Course Aims**

1. Support students in developing research knowledge and skills relevant to their discipline, practice and area of enquiry.
2. Enable students to identify, select, test and apply research approaches appropriate to their disciplinary and/or practice context through a focused programme of activity.
3. Develop students' capacity to undertake research with increasing autonomy, critical awareness and responsibility.

4. Encourage critical reflection on the relevance, application and limitations of research methods and processes.
5. Support the development of skills that may inform subsequent academic, creative or professional research.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of research approaches relevant to their disciplinary and/or practice context and area of enquiry.
2. Critically select, justify, test and apply methods and processes appropriate to a focused programme of research activity.
3. Undertake and manage research with increasing autonomy, exercising informed judgement in relation to disciplinary context, ethics and responsible practice.
4. Critically evaluate the selection, application and limitations of research methods and processes, and reflect on the development of their research skills.
5. Communicate their research activity and learning through forms appropriate to their discipline and enquiry.

**Indicative Content**

The content of the course will be shaped by the student's discipline, area of enquiry and research development needs.

Indicative content may include:

- disciplinary, interdisciplinary and practice-based research approaches;
- relationships between research, theory, practice, materials and context;
- methods of investigation, experimentation, making, prototyping, analysis or interpretation;
- approaches to documenting and evidencing practice and research processes;
- ethical and methodological considerations arising from different disciplinary and practice contexts;
- critical reflection on the selection, adaptation and limitations of research methods;
- relevant researcher development training offered by GSA.

The precise focus and balance of activity will be agreed through supervision within the parameters of the course intended learning outcomes and assessment requirements.

**Description of Learning and Teaching Methods**

The course is delivered through three cross-disciplinary seminars, individual supervision, and independent study. Seminars will be delivered through hybrid synchronous activities, enabling participation by both on-campus and distance-learning students. Relevant researcher development training offered by GSA may form part of the student's programme of activity where appropriate to their research development.

Cross-disciplinary seminars will address shared questions concerning the selection, application, documentation and critical evaluation of research approaches across GSA's disciplinary and practice contexts. Discipline-specific methodological development will principally take place through individual supervision and the student's agreed programme of research activity. Supervision and research activities will be arranged to accommodate students undertaking the course through either mode of study, recognising the disciplinary and methodological requirements of individual projects.

Students will receive three hours of individual supervision. Relevant researcher development training may be identified and undertaken in consultation with the supervisor.

At the outset of the course, students will work with their Primary Supervisor to identify individual research training and development needs, taking account of their disciplinary context, research methodologies and proposed Independent Research Project. These will inform a Research Training Plan, agreed within the first three months of study and reviewed through supervision.

Students are expected to engage with the training and development activities identified in their agreed plan, including relevant provision through GSA's Researcher Development Training Programme (RDTP) and discipline-specific training, as appropriate to their research needs. Engagement with these activities will support the development and critical reflection of research skills throughout the course.

Canvas will provide access to course information, assessment guidance and relevant institutional resources. Scheduled seminars and supervision arrangements will be communicated to students through Canvas. Learning and teaching will be supported through hybrid synchronous activities, individual supervision, asynchronous online resources and independent study, enabling students studying on campus and by distance learning to engage with the same curriculum and achieve the same Intended Learning Outcomes.

| Indicative Contact Hours | Notional Learning Hours |
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| 20 (Additional researcher development training may be undertaken within the course's notional learning hours where appropriate) | 200 |

| Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods |
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| Formative feedback will be provided through seminars and individual supervision. These activities will accommodate both on-campus and distance-learning students through hybrid seminars and supervision delivered in person or online, as appropriate.<br><br>Seminars will support cross-disciplinary discussion, peer exchange and reflection. Supervision will provide discipline-specific guidance on the development and application of research skills.<br><br>At least one formative review of work in progress will be scheduled during the course. Feedback will be provided in relation to the course intended learning outcomes. |

| Description of Summative Assessment arrangements |
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| The summative assessment will evidence the development, application and critical evaluation of research methods or processes appropriate to the student's disciplinary and/or practice context.<br><br>Students will undertake a bounded methodological development activity, such as a pilot study, prototype, experiment, practice-based enquiry, methodological trial or equivalent exercise agreed with the supervisor. The activity is intended to enable students to test and refine approaches that may subsequently inform the Independent Research Project, rather than constitute a substantive independent research project in itself. |

The submission will comprise appropriate documentation or outputs from this activity together with a critical account evaluating the methods or processes employed, their disciplinary context, effectiveness, limitations and implications for subsequent research.

Submissions will be assessed against the course intended learning outcomes and moderated in line with the GSA Code of Assessment. Written feedback will be provided. The same assessment requirements and academic standards apply to students undertaking the course through on-campus and distance-learning modes.

| Description of Summative Assessment Method | Weight % | Submission week |
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| Portfolio comprising evidence of a bounded methods-development activity, together with a critical account of the selection, application and evaluation of research methods or processes appropriate to the student's disciplinary and/or practice context. The form of the activity, associated documentation and/or outputs will be appropriate to the research undertaken.<br><br>Indicative word count: 2,000 words or equivalent, appropriate to the form of activity undertaken. | 100% | Week 12<br>(Semester 1) |

| Exchange/Study Abroad | |
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| **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**

Students will identify reading, practices, precedents and other resources appropriate to their discipline and area of enquiry.

Supervisors will provide further recommendations relevant to the student's research focus and developmental needs.

Students will also be directed to relevant researcher development training, research guidance, institutional policies, online learning materials and library resources available through Canvas and GSA services.