Glasgow School of Art Programme Specification
BDes Sound

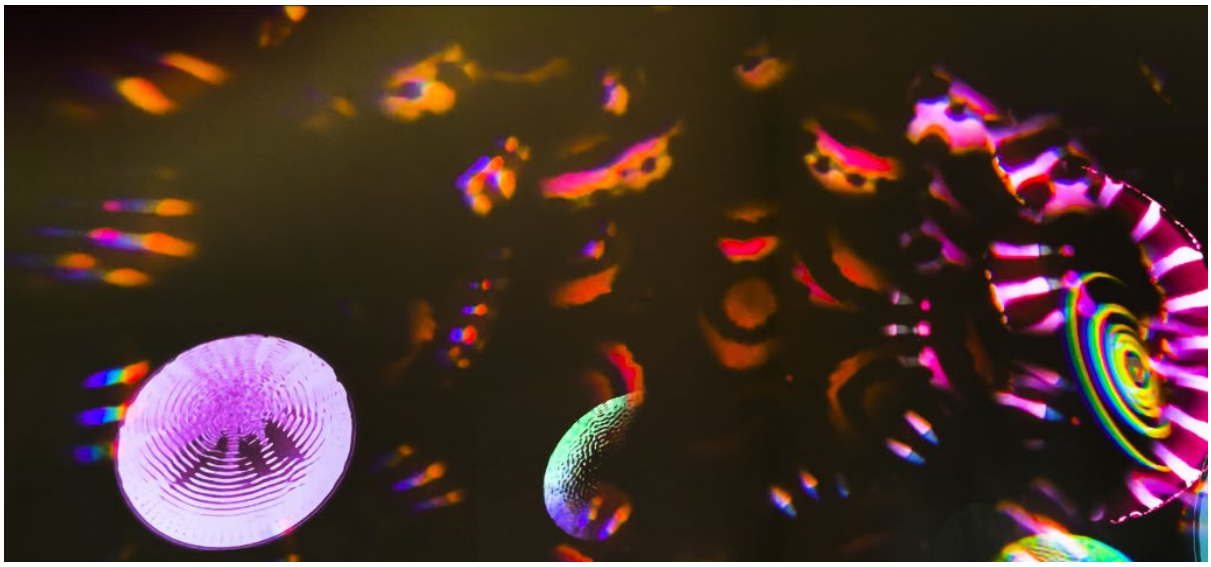


Image credit: Alexandra Bell, The Wave is Not the Water II, BDes Sound for Moving Image (2023)

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.

1. Programme Details	
Programme Title	BDes Sound
School	School of Innovation and Technology (SIT)
Programme Leader	Dr Jessica Argo
Award to be Conferred	BDes (Hons)
Exit Awards	Stage 3 – BDes Sound Stage 4 – BDes (Hons) Sound
SCQF Level	10
Credits	480 credits
Mode of Study	Full time on campus
HECOS Code	

Academic Session	2027-28
Date of Approval	Programme Approval October 2026

Awarding Institution	The University of Glasgow
Teaching Institutions	Glasgow School of Art
Campus	Glasgow
Lead School/Board of Studies	School of Innovation and Technology (SIT)
Other Schools/Board of Studies	N/A
Programme Accredited By (PSRBs)	N/A

2. Entry Qualifications	
Highers	N/A
A Levels	The Entry Requirements for Year 2 are ABB at A Level (or a Level 3 Extended Diploma from an FE College in England or Rest of UK), or an HNC in Sound Production; The Entry Requirements for Year 3 are HND in Sound Production at a Scottish Further Education College or equivalent.
Other	International Baccalaureate: 30 points overall in the Diploma, including 18 at Higher Level, normally including English and Maths. Irish Leaving Certificate: Four Highers at H2 or above - subjects required as per Scottish Highers. Other eligible qualifications for entry include Foundation Diplomas in Art & Design, Higher National Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation Degrees, Level 3 Diplomas, and other Further Education and Higher Education qualifications in related subjects. Entrants may begin their studies in Stage 2 or Stage 3 depending on the level of prior qualifications and other entry criteria. Detailed information about the required

	grades for individuals holding or studying these qualifications can be accessed on the website. Applicants from outside the UK and Ireland should also consult our International student pages for details of accepted qualifications from specific countries. Applicants who do not meet entry requirements through formal qualifications but can demonstrate experience, skills and abilities at the appropriate level can also be considered. Additional entry requirements: Applicants are normally required to submit a portfolio or work and may be required to attend an Interview as part of their admissions assessment.
English Language Requirements	Applicants who are not a national of, nor have obtained a degree in one of the countries on the approved UKVI exemption list or those who require a Student Visa, will need to provide evidence of their English language ability. GSA's preferred test is the IELTS for UKVI (Academic) test taken at a UKVI approved test centre. GSA require all students, who require a student visa, to meet the following requirements to gain entry: • IELTS for UKVI Academic with an overall score of 6 with a minimum of 5.5 in all components; • An alternative Accepted English Language Test which can be found on the Postgraduate 'How to Apply' page of the GSA website.

3. Programme Introduction
The BDes Sound programme encourages students to make highly creative, concept-driven sound and audiovisual work, using innovative recording, production and post-production technologies. This undergraduate programme has been written in response to the increased recognition of the importance of sound, moving image and their diverse contexts as part of the Scottish creative, cultural and commercial landscapes. The programme will also tap into the worldwide increase in media production for an increasingly diverse and divergent audience through multiple digital distribution platforms. Students will develop detailed theoretical, practical and technical knowledge in sound production (at times for visual media), where they can execute industry standard workflows, and incorporate careful ethical processes. Throughout the programme, project briefs are set to support students in creating: • the anatomy of a soundtrack for visual material • creative practice to explore microphones' capture of sound in context, and how speakers playback sound in studio

- original soundscapes
- documentaries
- original short films (with narrative or abstract forms)
- spatial and immersive audio (including audio for games)
- voice for audiobooks, advertisement, radio jingles
- music and sound design for film or animation
- and an extended self-directed research project

In addition to making original practical works in Studio courses, students gradually build critical reading, analysis, academic writing and presentation skills in SIT Electives in Year 2 and Critical Studies courses in Year 3. These prepare students for a large-scale, self-directed Research Project in Year 4 (a substantial piece of academic writing and a practical project). Throughout the programme, the critical studies and research courses encourage the development of a solid contextualisation and reflection within the studio projects too. This empowers graduates to succeed as industry professionals, whilst also making their practice self-sustaining. The BDes Sound programme continually encourages students to challenge and re-invent industrial systems to make them more inclusive, accessible, and innovative. Students are also mentored to become responsible creative citizens who address societal, cultural and sustainability matters at local and global levels. Students learn to make sound and audio-visual work that is meaningful and accessible to our society and that diversifies representation both behind and in-front of the camera.

The programme structure fosters interdisciplinarity and collaboration across the School of Innovation and Technology, with SIT Elective courses in Year 2 and Year 3. HHere, the students can share a classroom with like-minded students from BDes Product Design and BSc Immersive Systems Design who chose the same thematic study option. Across Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 there is a progression from scaffolded studio projects with tutor-selected mediums and deliverables, to self-directed and supervisor-supported projects where the student chooses their medium (e.g. sound alone, film or an interactive platform or experience). The interdisciplinarity and choice within the programme allows students to tailor their learning experience and build a creative portfolio for their chosen industry.

Support entry points and year group transitions
The programme has two possible entry points: Year 2 and Year 3.Students are supported in their transition into Higher Education through a range of academic, pastoral and community-building initiatives designed to foster a sense of belonging, facilitate engagement with the wider GSA community, and ensure signposting and access to appropriate professional support services.

Graduate Destinations
The programme prepares students for a career in the field of sound creative practice, and sound production and post-production for the moving image. The programme provides a grounding in the professional practice of sound production for visual environments, such as film, animation, television, online, interactive media and games, theatre and art installations. Graduates have found employment as audio professionals and practitioners in key creative industries and progressed to a range of careers in audio-visual arts, game development and film and television. Graduates have built careers as:

- sound recordists/editors/composers for film/broadcast/television;
- Director of Photography/producing/videography camera operators for film/broadcast/television;
- broadcast engineering apprentices;

- sound/film practitioners for neurodivergent/outreach/disability/underrepresented communities and young people;
- Founders of Community Interest Company enterprises;
- freelance voice actors
- independent fine art/music practitioners in sound art festivals, artists residencies, contemporary musicians

Further graduate paths include research and post-graduate study from Masters (MRes/MDes/MA) to PhD; others progress to work in academic contexts, as lecturers, education support, technicians, or Learning Technology for College/Higher Education/International contexts.

4. Programme Aims

The programme aims to equip students with the ability to:

- Discover their identity as creative practitioners, who can conceptualise and justify original approaches to sound design and moving image generation, to build a sustainable and professional creative practice
- Familiarise themselves with industry standard practical workflows for sound and audio-visual works, from capture/generation to final output - and to follow ethical approaches and professional guidelines.
- Design and develop, as creative citizens, sound and audio-visual work that learns from and works sensitively with the community and habitat in which it is created.
- Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion in sound and audio-visual culture from its production structures to its narrative representations.
- Approach collaborative projects with a commitment to pragmatic planning, positive contribution, consistent communication and pro-active inclusion of diverse knowledges amongst group members.
- Critically investigate, reflect on, theorise and apply knowledge of existing practices and academic writing in the fields of sound, narrative, experimental, or documentary film and games
- Confidently communicate their practice to their peers, public and specialists, adapting their ICT approaches to diverse contexts, on a professional level.

5. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

After participation in and successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Conceptualise and justify the use of innovative methods and creative making with sound (and at times, moving image) in order to interrogate personal, cultural or societal issues.
- Develop original audio-visual production work following industry standards, professional workflows and ethical approaches for sound recording, video capture and generation
- Design and develop (individually and in collaboration) sound and audio-visual narratives, and experimental works that sensitively respect external environments, communities and habitats.
- Critically design, apply and present academic research using knowledge, skills and understanding gained on the programme.
- Communicate project outcomes and concepts to peers and diverse audiences, in a structured and accessible manner.

6. Description of Learning and Teaching Approaches

The programme is comprised mostly of studio-based learning,in interactive lecture and discussions, with accompanying critical studies and academic research courses. There is a combination of both individual projects and collaborative projects. The students' outcomes and processes are shared through sound or audio-visual playback, presentations and, when relevant, user-testing workshops.

Practically, learning and teaching approaches are supported contact time in the form of:

- Live lectures with Q+A participation (sometimes flipped learning, with pre-recorded, pause-able and captioned lecture videos to be viewed asynchronously, which enables synchronous contact time on campus to be supported group discussion)
- workshops, with hands-on demonstrations of recording technologies
- lab sessions, with scaffolded practical exercises to ensure stepping-stone learning of Digital Audio Workstations, video editing software, game engines, and interactive audio platforms (to build confidence for the larger Studio project brief)
- Formative peer reviews to build students' confidence in communicating their concepts and creative process, and to support improvements to their practical work.
- Asynchronous preparatory exercises, such as active reading and responding to assigned texts or influential media. Students frequently write text responses to share in discussions with their peers and tutors. This is supported with customised learning technology interfaces likePadlet or Miro)
- supervision meetings for extended self-directed Research Projects
- Regular shared workshops on Research Methods.

Students will be encouraged to communicate their processes and outcomes, as **presentation skills** are taught, in addition to the studio techniques and creative ideation.

The programme scaffolds the students' creativity in supportive and stimulating project briefs, which gradually increase in self-direction over Years 2, 3 and 4. This means students become comfortable choosing their own medium for creative practice and having more freedom in the structuring of critical reflection by the time they reach Year 4.

Learning technologies support these approaches, such as the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment as the map of the courses. Canvas is where the timetable and lectures are stored, preparatory tasks are set and the reading lists and video resources are accessed. Canvas also hosts all summative assessment briefs and submission portals. Interactive learning technologies (like Padlet and Miro) are also crucial to teaching delivery and class participation, also enablingstudent organisation and collaboration. – Students can use Padlet and Miro to moodboard, mindmap, and gather substantial multi-modal research and generate critical analysis comments on their sources with ease. Helpfully, these platforms encourage a multi-sensory collection of sounds/videos or time-based content, to create a living sketchbook, or behind the scenes of their creative process.

7. Description of Assessment Methods

Assessment methods include both formative and summative tasks.

Formative methods include tutorial sessions or peer review presentations. Peer reviews allow students to advance their learning and celebrate each-others' achievements in a supportive, connected learning environment. Formative reviews can happen mid-way through a project to ensure achievable project aims, procedures, planning and source gathering; with further check-ins near the final stages of a project so staff and students can discuss constructive suggestions to enhance the outcomes before final submission.

Summative assessment is differentiated at a course level:
For Studio projects, deliverables include a practical output (e.g. a soundscape, a film, or video documentation of an interactive interface), along with a critically reflective, analytical and contextual component. The reflective/analysis/contextual component is often text-based, although Concept and Process Evaluation Videos or Reflective Workflow Evaluation Videos are sometimes required. The practical project briefs have varying formats for a written reflective component, appropriate to the medium of a particular practical work, for example an audience-directed statement, a conceptual statement or a technical report. For Critical Studies in Year 3 and the Research Project course in Year 4, students submit longer written assignments.

In Year 3, students critically analyse existing historical or contemporary sound or audio-visual practice from a chosenfield . Students investigate and analyse the theoretical debates arising from this existing historical/contemporary practice.

In Year 4, students complete a structured Research Project, creating a practical work and a piece of academic writing. The students can opt for a practice-based self-reflection style of writing, or a scientific mode of writing, for example with user-testing evaluation of their original practical project.

All summative assessments are marked and graded in line with GSA's Code of Assessment.

8. Programme Structure

Students take 120 credits of courses in each year, ranging from theoretically informed courses to practice-based courses.

For those directly entering into Stage 2, BDes Sound Studio 2 courses will familiarise students with technical procedures/processes, through issuing scaffolded and creative project briefs (more prescriptive than Year 3 and 4). Year 2 students will be able to choose from diverse Study Options in two 20-credit interdisciplinary and vertical SIT Elective courses, with classrooms (and sometimes group projects) shared with Year 2 and 3, BDes Product Design, and BSc Immersive Systems Design students.

In Year 3, students to become more deeply familiarised to the School of Innovation and Technology's facilities and studio community ethos. Year 3 begins with short scaffolded practical Studio projects in soundscape and video editing before a longer self-directed studio project in narrative and abstract film, as well as a project in Audio Visual Technology, and critical studies assignments.
Year 3 students will choose from Study Options in one 20-credit interdisciplinary and vertical SIT elective course (as above).

In the final year, BDes students undertake a Research Project, writing 4,500-5,500 or 8,000-10,000 words to support an appropriate large scale practical project. Students also conceptualise a Spatial and Immersive Audio project, and a self-directed creative studio project (situating their practice in their chosen field), as well as commercial/industry related projects.

Overall, across Years 2, 3 and 4, there is a sense of progression in the sequence of courses:

- a build in the level of responsibility or challenge;
- a growth of the scope of the deliverables submitted;
- an increase in complexity the Intended Learning Outcomes;

- and, crucially, a development in the students' self-direction over time.

The graduates complete their final year with a heightened awareness of how to work, connect and thrive in Industry and other Situated Practices. The earlier courses in Studio, Critical Studies, Ethical and Professional Issues, and the elective study options across Innovation and Technology prepare them to achieve virtuosity in their chosen field as they graduate.

Stage 2				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Studio 2 – Anatomy of Sound	40	8	1	
S.I.T. Elective 2A	20	8	1	
Studio 2 – Sound in Context and Studio	40	8	2	
SIT Elective 2B or Languages	20	8	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 3				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Studio 3 – Sound and Video	30	9	1	
Critical Studies in Sound for Image	10	9	1	
S.I.T. Elective 3	20	9	1	
Studio 3 – Sound and Video (Narrative and Abstract Forms)	30	9	2	
Audio Visual Technology	20	9	2	
Critical Studies: Ethical and Professional Issues	10	9	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

Stage 4				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Studio 4 – Situated Practice	20	10	1	
Research Project	40	10	1 & 2	
Spatial and Immersive Audio	20	10	1	
Studio 4 – Sound for Industry	40	10	2	
Total Stage Credits	**120**			

9. Outgoing Exchange and Visiting Student Arrangements

In line with the Glasgow School of Art internationalisation strategy, the programme enhances curriculum and learning opportunities in ways which enable students and graduates to operate effectively in international and global contexts.

Exchange In / Study Abroad

Visiting Exchange and Study Abroad students can join BDes Sound in Stage 3 (SCQF Level 9) normally in either Semester 1 or Semester 2. All incoming Visiting Exchange and Study Abroad students will follow the set courses for the programme and semester structure outlined in the table below.

Exchange Out

BDes (Hons) Sound students who have entered in Year 2 may be able to undertake a period of exchange with one of our international partner institutions in their third year of study. Outgoing International exchanges will normally take place in Stage 3 of study (SCQF Level 9) and will normally be for the duration of one Semester (15 weeks), either Semester 1 or Semester 2. All outgoing BDes (Hons) exchange students will be expected to achieve the equivalent of 60 SCQF/30 ECTS academic credits for one semester at their host institution. BDes (Hons) Sound students who wish to go out on Exchange may apply for international exchange in their second year of study. To be eligible for consideration for international exchange the student will normally have achieved a minimum grade of C3 at the formative assessment stage of the studio course components in Stage 2.

We cannot offer an outward exchange for those directly entering BDes (Hons) Sound in Year 3 as the degree award requires a minimum duration of attendance at GSA of 24 months.

Building on international partnerships, students on the BDes Sound programme will benefit from international collaborative educational partnerships when incoming Exchange or Study Abroad students join the cohort. This deepens transcultural understandings and allows students to experience different cultures and learning contexts.

Stage 3 Exchange and Visiting Student Courses				
Course	**Credits**	**SCQF Level**	**Semester**	**Course Code**
Semester One				
Studio 3 – Sound and Video	30	9	1	
Critical Studies in Sound for Moving Image	10	9	1	
S.I.T. Elective 3	20	9	1	
Semester Two				
Studio 3 – Sound and Video (Narrative and Abstract Forms)	30	9	2	
Audio Visual Technology	20	9	2	
Critical Studies: Ethical and Professional Issues	10	9	2	

10. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and Other External Reference Points

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. For further information relevant to this programme see: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-communication-media-film-and-cultural-studies.pdf

11. Programme Regulations and Requirements for Progression

All GSA Degree programmes are validated by the University of Glasgow and the GSA's Programme Regulations are published in the University of Glasgow University Regulations.

These regulations include the requirements in relation to:

(a) Award of the degree
(b) Progression requirements
(c) Early exit awards

In referring to regulations for degree programmes, students should consult the University Regulations which were in force in the academic session in which they first registered for the degree programme in question.