

**University of Glasgow**  
**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 29 May 2009**  
**Revalidation Report – Master of Design (Textiles as Fashion)**  
**Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Senate Office**

**The Glasgow School of Art**

**Summary Report of the Master of Design (Textiles as Fashion) Validation Meeting held on Thursday 18 March 2009**

**Validation Panel:**

Ms Sarah Clark, Head of Academic and Student Services (GSA)  
Mr Tim Gray, Lecturer, MDes Animation (GSA)  
Dr Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Senior Lecturer, English Literature, University of Glasgow  
Dr Anna O'Neill, Senior Clinical University Teacher and Faculty of Medicine (Nursing & Health Care) Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer  
Ms Joyce Thornton, Former Senior Editor Generation Now, Worth Global Style Network  
Ms Pat Dillon, Division Leader - School of Design, University of Wolverhampton  
Ms Negar Mihanyar, Student Reviewer (apologies)

**Programme Team:**

Mr Jimmy Stephen-Cran, Programme Leader  
Ms Beca Lipscombe, Practice Tutor/Programme Coordinator  
Ms Helen McGilp, Creative Process Journal Tutor

**Attending:**

Dr Glyn Davis, Academic Coordinator (Postgraduate Studies)  
Ms Jacqui Fernie, Assistant Registrar (Quality)

**1. Summary**

The Validation Panel **agreed** to recommend to the Academic Council of the Glasgow School of Art, through its Postgraduate Committee that the MDes (Textiles as Fashion) be validated for a period of six years, subject to 2 conditions and 2 advisory recommendations, outlined below.

**2. Conditions**

The Programme Team is asked to:

- 2.1 Continue and complete the process of reviewing the programme title, taking account of titles of similar programmes currently available in the sector. Research and consideration of the programme title should be completed with the Marketing and Communications Office. Any change of title should reflect the strengths and uniqueness of the programme.

2.2 Revise the Definitive Programme Document and Course Descriptors, especially in relation to aims and learning outcomes.

### **3. Advisory Recommendations**

3.1 With the Academic Coordinator (Postgraduate Studies) consider the development of a part-time option and opportunities for flexible delivery, CPD and short-courses.

3.2 Consider the benefits of greater formalisation of the opportunities for team work and collaboration amongst students on the programme, with each other, other postgraduate students across the GSA, with undergraduate students and with industry and employers.

### **4. Introduction**

4.1 The MDes in 'Textiles as Fashion' (TAF) is an advanced skills postgraduate programme currently designed to meet the ambitions of textile graduates who wish to inspire and assert Fashion from the 'textile-outwards' or surface.

4.2 The programme is available full-time (45 weeks) and delivered via seminar based core units and electives.

### **5. Private Meeting of the Panel**

5.1 The Panel wished to explore the following areas:

- How students are encouraged to work collaboratively.
- How combining the essay and Design Process Journal would be managed.
- Resourcing
- How the Programme Team will creatively market the programme.
- How does the programme title reflect the balance between 'surface' and 'silhouette'
- The integration of theory and practice.
- How will research skills reembedded into the programme.
- How visual/verbal skills are assessed.
- Possibilities for reassessment.
- Opportunities for part-time study or offering courses as CPD
- Feasibility of industrial placements.
- Use of the VLE and peer assessment.

### **6. Meeting with Programme Team**

6.1 The Programme Team explained that the evolution of the programme came from a growing demand within the market from textile designers who wanted to develop their skills in the fashion arena. Previously textiles design and fashion design had been seen as separate activities and the programme was developed to educationally support this change. While the emphasis to date has been on surface (textiles) rather than silhouette, the intention was to widen the scope of the programme to attract who wished to form an silhouette.

6.2 Asked about the close links between theory and practice and how it managed and promoted, the Programme Team reported that the Creative Process Journal (CPJ) tutor and Historical and Critical Studies (H&C) tutor work closely together. The CPJ is

- designed to encourage students to be reflective about their practice, while the H & C component provides students with a historical context for their work. These two elements are then brought together in students' studio practice.
- 6.3 The CPJ is seen as a response to individual students' journey through the programme and as such is flexible in terms of its presentation.
  - 6.4 The CPJ is submitted as separate themed components with deadlines at the end of each stage to alleviate the burden of a heavy written workload at the end of the session. In response to a query by the Critical Friend at Annual Programme Monitoring, regarding a possible duplication of learning outcomes in the CPJ and H & C essay and in response to the introduction of the Common Academic Framework for Taught Postgraduate Programmes, the Programme Team proposed that the CPJ and essay be combined and that the core principles of the essay should be reflected in the CPJ.
  - 6.5 In response to a query on the relationship between the CPJ and the Exit Portfolio, the Programme Team reported that the CPJ forms part of the Exit Portfolio. Following comments from the External Examiner, the Exit Portfolio package was strengthened to include design work, as evidenced through the CPJ, an 'Own Brand' statement and Curriculum Vitae. The Exit Portfolio is designed to give students the opportunity to utilize software to support, enhance and communicate their work, to make professional presentation and portfolio packages and to communicate visually and textually with specialist and non specialist audiences.
  - 6.6 Asked about students' understanding of the role of the CPJ, the Programme Team reported that students are encouraged and supported through the initial stages of the CPJ. The Programme Team emphasis to students the importance of being self reflective, together with the demands of rigor in their CPJ. Initially students are resistant and self conscious in relation to the CPJ, but through careful support, students appreciate on the importance of the journal and it completing it eventually becomes second nature.
  - 6.7 The CPJ has, indirectly, become a valuable source of student feedback as students often reflect on the problematic issues relating to the programme, as well as reflecting on their own practice.
  - 6.8 The Panel wished to explore the fashion element of the programme and asked the Programme Team to describe how students would be supported in this area, given the intention to strengthen the provision for those wishing to focus on silhouette rather than surface.
  - 6.9 The Programme Team reported that the programme is primarily aimed at students from a textiles background, although fashion students can join the programme. The Programme Team have a wide range of fashion experience and expertise. All students, including 'fashion students' are encouraged to collaborate with other students; both from the undergraduate programme and postgraduate programme. The Programme Team wished to avoid seeing fashion and textiles as separate pathways. Collaborations between students usually occur naturally and students provide an informal support network for each other. All collaborative work has to be evidenced in the CPJ.
  - 6.10 The Panel wished to explore the programme's title noting the relationship between textiles and fashion was clearly a unique selling point of the programme and asked what market research had been done on the programme's title.

- 6.11 The Programme Team suggested that 'Textiles and Fashion' could accurately describe the programme. The GSA undergraduate textiles programme has a reputation for producing good textiles graduates and any change of title should not limit the potential market for the programme. T
- 6.12 Throughout the programme students are asked to present their work and are given the opportunity to develop their communication skills until, by the end of the programme, they have developed high-level communication skills.
- 6.13 The Panel wished to explore the programme structure and asked if there were part-time study or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities within the programme, or if all courses had to be taken in a strict order.
- 6.14 The Programme Team reported that, in their experience, applicants are looking for a one-year intensive programme and that they had not received any enquiries for part-time or CPD studies. Students are required to take courses in order. The Research Skills for Postgraduate Students is a core mandatory course for all postgraduate programmes and, as the CPJ is summatively assessed, it may be difficult to offer courses as CPD. The Validation Panel noted that with the nature of employment changing, there may be opportunities to develop short courses for those already employed in the industry.
- 6.15 Asked about the support available to students who are in danger of not progressing, the Programme Team described the Cause for Concern process. The Programme Team meet regularly to discuss student progression and identify any weaknesses experienced by students and, together with students, a plan of approach is developed to support students. The Cause for Concern proforma, which identifies problems and the action to be taken, is also circulated to Registry and Student Support departments.
- 6.16 The Panel wished to explore learning outcomes and assessment as described in the course descriptors. The Panel noted that there were no course descriptors of the electives available to TAF students in the Definitive Programme Document. The Panel welcomed the diagram explaining the linked nature of undergraduate and postgraduate provision within the Textiles department.
- 6.17 In response to a query on resources to grow the fashion element of the programme, the Programme Team reported that discussions are ongoing in relation to the planned undergraduate fashion programme.

## **7. Meeting with Students and recent Graduates**

- 7.1 Asked about their experiences of the programme, the students reported that the programme feels like a natural progression from the undergraduate textiles programme. Students reported that they felt they did not have the skill set to go into the fashion industry and the TAF programme provides them with these skills.
- 7.2 Students described the programme as intensive and they have picked up these fashion skills quickly with the good support of all the Programme Team.
- 7.3 Students reported that they were having a 'great experience'; different from the undergraduate programme but one that has allowed them to build skills other than knowledge necessary for the fashion industry.

- 7.4 Asked whether they felt part of a bigger GSA postgraduate community, the students reported that they felt that as the programme is intensive, it also feels insular. Students were aware that collaborative working is encouraged and felt they could access information easily.
- 7.5 Students reported that the programme had met their expectations as a programme which develops textile designer's skills in fashion. The students reported that the cohort come from a variety of backgrounds, with varying levels of skills when it came to fashion skills such as pattern cutting.
- 7.6 In response to a query on the programme title, the students reported that the title made immediate sense to them as a progression from textiles to fashion. Graduates from the programme reported that they had had opportunities to gain work experience through internships with various small fashion houses and that this networking opportunity had led to a consolidation of their career choices. Students and graduates acknowledged that the job market had gotten tougher.
- 7.7 The Panel wished to explore students' experiences of the CPJ. Both students and graduates reported that the CPJ was very useful practice and one that carried on after the programme ended. They welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their own practice and felt fully supported on the development of their CPJ. They reported that they were unsure about the purpose of the CPJ at the start of the programme but with weekly tutorials with the CPJ tutor, which was also an opportunity to discuss any issues they may be having in their practice, they grew to understand its importance. They had not read anyone else's CPJ as it was personal to them.
- 7.8 Although they did not have formal lectures on research methodologies, students and graduates felt the CPJ allowed them the freedom and flexibility to build their own research, presentation and IT skills. They welcomed the deadlines imposed on the production of the CPJ and reported that it felt logical to them. They had not produced a fashion collection before and the CPJ and exit portfolio had consolidated that experience for them.
- 7.9 Asked if the opportunity to complete the programme part-time would have appealed them, they reported that they were attracted to the programme because it was a one-year intensive programme necessary to gain those additional skills they felt were missing from their undergraduate experience.
- 7.10 Both students and graduates reported that their undergraduate experience differed from their postgraduate experience in the support they received from the Programme Team who are available to talk to about their ideas. They reported that they found the work demanding and rewarding.
- 7.11 Asked about the opportunities to engage with external research and how their awareness of current fashion trends was encouraged, students and graduates reported that this is incorporated into the H & C essay. Students/Graduates reported that there were no field trips or visiting lectures arranged, but they felt that they would have been fully supported had they wished to do so. Students/Graduates reported that it would be useful to strengthen links with the fashion industry.
- 7.12 Asked what they would change in the programme, students and graduates reported that more information and opportunities for constructive textiles would be welcomed, although they noted that the knit tutor for the undergraduate programme had taken one tutorial with postgraduate students. As would more support for pattern and knit.

The Students/Graduate emphasised they felt fully supported by the Programme Team.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 The Panel congratulated the Programme Team on a highly successful and unique programme.
- 8.2 The Panel considered the Creative Process Journal, the good sense of community amongst the students and staff and the pastoral care offered by the Department (through the Cause for Concern system) as areas of good practice.
- 8.3 The Validation Panel **agreed** to recommend to the Academic Council of the Glasgow School of Art, through its Postgraduate Committee that the MDes (Textiles as Fashion) be validated for a period of six years, subject to 2 conditions and 2 advisory recommendations, outlined above.

Draft 1 29.04.09

Approved by Convenor: 01.05.09