

University of Glasgow
Academic Standards Committee - Friday 29 May 2009
Stage 2 Validation Report – MDes Design Innovation

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Senate Office

Monday 18 May 2009, The Design School Seminar Room

Validation Panel

Dr Ken Neil, Head of Historical and Critical Studies GSA, (Convenor)
 Mr Stuart McKenzie, Lecturer, Painting/Printmaking School of Fine Art (GSA)
 Professor Roger Downie, Professor of Zoological Education, Faculty Quality Assurance/Enhancement Officer for Faculty of Biomedical and Life Sciences (GU)
 Ms Helen Reid, FBLS Undergraduate Administrator and Faculty Quality Assurance/Enhancement Officer for Faculty of Biomedical and Life Sciences (GU)
 Professor Colin Burns, Martach Associates, Visiting Professor of Innovation Product Design, Dundee University
 Mr Martin Bontoft, User Research & Design Strategy
 Ms Ellie Harrison, Student Reviewer

Development Team

Mr Bill Brown, Head of Ceramic Design
 Dr Glyn Davis, Academic Coordinator (Postgraduate Studies)
 Dr Gordon Hush, Programme Leader, BDes/MEDes Product Design

Attending

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 Design Innovation be validated for a six year period, subject to four recommendations, outlined below.

2. Advisory Recommendations

The Development Team is asked to:

- 2.1 Clearly articulate in the Definitive Programme Document and in the Student Programme handbook the parameters within which a student can negotiate their coursework and, if applicable, the respective weighting of that coursework, on commencement of the stage 3 Research Project.
- 2.2 Given the emphasis on collaborative working, consider devices to ensure parity in assessing collaborative projects. The Development Team may wish to consider the work done by the Higher Education Academy on peer assessment.

- 2.3 Consider how the distinctiveness of the programme and the progression of specialist knowledge gained through the three discrete pathways can be more clearly articulated to inform future marketing strategies.
- 2.4 Monitor in good time the distribution of the number of students in each pathway to ensure minimum numbers to create critical mass in group working.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The proposed Master of Design (MDes) in Design Innovation is a new one-year, 180 credit postgraduate programme framework being introduced in the School of Design. The framework will launch with three pathways of study in the first instance, with specialisms available in Transformation Design, Environmental Design and Service Design.
- 3.2 The programme would provide an academic framework for postgraduate students to engage with the craft of user-led and co-created innovation in design practice across a variety of fields and in widely differentiated social, economic, technological and industrial contexts. It aims to furnish students with the research skills and methods for stimulating innovation through a combination of tutor-led classes and autonomous design and research projects. The programme aims to identify emerging areas of design practice, stimulate innovative thinking in response to these areas and to develop theoretical, methodological and practice-based approaches that will assist designers in responding to the challenges presented by 21st century society, economy and technology.

4. Private Meeting of the Panel

- 4.1 The Panel wished to explore the following areas with the Development Team:
- The staffing and resources of the programme, with particular reference to the Visiting Lecturer Programme and the role of the Head of the School of Design on the teaching team.
 - Further detail of the Contextual Practice course
 - Part-time provision. The Validation Panel noted that Stage Two courses are not dependent on Stage One courses. The Panel was keen to explore any possible disadvantages to part-time students.
 - Assessment of Collaborative work and the opportunities for peer assessment.
 - Clarification of the process of negotiating Stage Three submissions and what are the limits of this negotiation.
 - Clarification on how assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes are differentiated within the programme documentation.
 - Mechanism for admissions and the minimum and maximum number of students needed for a pathway to run.
 - The availability of mandatory courses in Stage Two to other postgraduate programmes.
 - The programme's marketing strategy and plans for future growth.

5. Meeting with Development Team

- 5.1 The Validation Panel began by asking how the staff structure of the programme had changed from Stage One and in particular how over-reliance on particular members of staff is avoided.

- 5.2 The Development Team reported that work had been undertaken to expand the Programme Team to include other School of Design Staff. This would be augmented by a robust Visiting Lecturers Programme. As well as input from local sources, such as the University of Glasgow and London based design consultancies, the Development Team hope the involvement of large multinational corporations, who may employ future graduates, could attract applicants to the programme. These strategic alliances would be developed through the Contextual Practices course.
- 5.3 In response to a query on the Contextual Practice course, the Development Team explained that course would be lead by a tutor whose specialism is sustainability and 'soft-edge design'. Having looked at other postgraduate programme structures, the programme structure was redesigned to allow for larger blocks of learning and Contextual Practice course would incorporate more content, for example, business skills. It was felt that short courses did not allow for effective collaborative work. The course would also involve live projects outside of GSA.
- 5.4 The Validation Panel sought clarification on the structure of the part-time option and asked if this flexible structure could disadvantage part-time students. The Development Team explained that only entry into Stage Three was dependent on completing pre-requisites. The proposed part-time structure has been design to allow non-traditional students opportunities to negotiate their way through the programme as available. The Development Team are mindful, however, of the issues surrounding part-time students' interaction with the postgraduate community.
- 5.5 Asked about the place of the Core Research course, the Development Team reported that the course provides students with fundamental research skills and, although important, students also undertake practical inductions from the Library and Learning Resources. The Core Research course can already be taken in Stage Two.
- 5.6 The Panel wished to explore how collaborative work would be fairly assessed. The Development Team explained that student would present their group project to the cohort; identifying their own contribution to the final project outcome. Students would be asked to present on their role in the group and reflect on their understanding of the work and how what they have achieved has impacted on their learning. All is assessed against the stated intended learning outcomes for the project. Tutor's close involvement in studios also aid in the final assessment of group work. The Panel suggested that a collaborative proforma could be developed on which students could attribute their involvement and which would allow tutors to assign individual marks accordingly.
- 5.7 In response to a query on the negotiation of assessment weightings. The Development Team clarified that students could negotiate the final form of their research project, for example, students could submit a portfolio of practice, a dissertation or a combination of the two according to the needs of the project. The Panel suggested that this point should be made more explicit in the documentation.
- 5.8 The Panel was interested in exploring the admissions process and the maximum and minimum number of students needed for a pathway to run.
- 5.9 Applicants are asked to identify their chosen pathway at the application stage and offered appropriately. Before the programme commences, the numbers on each pathway would be assessed. If a pathway was found not to have adequate student numbers, the decision would be made not to offer the pathway. Applicants would be informed and offered an alternative. Based on current application numbers, the Development Team was confident all pathways would run in Session 2009/10.

5.10 The Panel was interested in exploring the marketing strategy for the programme. The Development Team noted that visibility and publicity would be generated through student involvement in real-world projects. A strong connection with the Design sector and future employers through the VL programme would also create a market for the programme. As the programme has grown out of the research interests of the School of Design staff, the research profile of the programme would be strengthened through the production of research outcomes and publications. The Panel suggested that the Development Team may wish to consider the programme title and to ask if the title adequate markets the programme to prospective applicants.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Validation Panel was very supportive of the programme which it considered as innovative and exciting and answers a demand for high calibre design graduates capable of working across disciplines.

6.2 The Validation Panel **agreed** to recommend to the Academic Council of the Glasgow School of Art, through its Postgraduate Committee that the MDes Design Innovation be validated for a six year period, subject to four recommendations, outlined above.

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Approved by Convenor: 19.05.09