

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 30 September 2016

Report of the Visit by a Panel from the University of Glasgow to the Glasgow School of Art's Forres Campuses on 1-2 August 2016

Robbie Mulholland, Clerk, Joint Liaison Committee of the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow School of Art

Present:

University of Glasgow (UofG) Panel:

Dr Vicki Dale, Curriculum Architect, Learning & Teaching Centre
Mr Robbie Mulholland, Academic Collaborations Manager

Glasgow School of Art (GSA):

Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam, Head of School of Design and Director of the Creative Campus
Dr Gordon Hush, Head of Product Design, Design Innovation Programme Leader
Mrs Janet Allison, Head of Policy and Governance (Deputy Registrar)
Ms Marianne McInnes, Operations Manager, Altyre Campus

1. Introduction

The visit had been organised to allow the University to review facilities at GSA's new Altyre Campus (located two miles outside the town of Forres in Morayshire). The main focus of the visit was to establish that the learning experience and facilities available to PGT students at the site would be of a standard at least equivalent to that available at GSA's Glasgow campus.

The Altyre campus would open in September 2016 and the first cohort would comprise both new and existing students, the latter group transferring from GSA's current facility in Forres town centre (the Horizon campus). An event to mark the official launch of the new campus would take place in November 2016 or early in 2017.

2. Background

The Horizon and Altyre campuses (together The Creative Campus, Highlands and Islands) had been established as part of the Creative Futures Partnership (a strategic initiative involving GSA and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), with additional support from Historic Scotland and the Altyre Estate.) The partnership had combined 'GSA's strengths in creativity and innovation with HIE's economic and community development expertise'¹ to develop a creative industries hub in the Highlands.

The first phase of the initiative was formalised in 2010 and centred on the Horizon campus. The primary focus at that stage was on research and knowledge exchange and how this might promote economic and community development in fragile and isolated communities. The scope of the Creative Futures Partnership widened during 2014/15 and plans were put in place to re-develop the former Blairs Farm Steading and adjacent buildings on the Altyre Estate as a new campus for GSA. Now, after more than 2 years' renovation work, the campus is about to open and, in so doing, will enable 'GSA to

develop different ways of teaching and to undertake research of specific relevance to geographically dispersed communities.¹²

In session 2015-16, GSA expanded its PGT provision and introduced three additional named awards for the MDes in Design Innovation programme:- the MDes Design Innovation and Collaborative Creativity, the MDes Design Innovation and Interaction Design, and the MDes Design Innovation and Transformation Design. The programmes will be delivered from Altyre and commence in September 2016 with approximately 10-15 students in total based there. This figure includes the new PGT Masters' students and the research students currently based at Horizon who will transfer to the new site. It is predicted that the numbers at Altyre will increase significantly over the coming years as the new campus becomes more established.

The Creative Futures Partnership's commitment to community engagement had been core to developments at Altyre. As an economic and community development agency, HIE had an obligation to ensure that ventures entered into with partner organisations had positive impact on local and regional economies. This commitment, together with a desire to establish a clear physical presence in the heart of the community, prompted GSA to open a shop in Forres High Street. The shop was a research project and would host events and activities while acting as a focal point for collaborative work involving design researchers and local residents. GSA had used 'pop-up' shops in the past as part of research projects and saw this as an imaginative way of engaging directly with the local community. The shop in Forres would showcase activities at Altyre and also allow GSA designers to tap into creative and business opportunities made possible by a thriving artisan community in Morayshire.

It was hoped that activities at the new campus would complement existing activities at GSA's main campus in Glasgow and its Singapore campus (in partnership with Singapore Institute of Technology). Altyre would utilise GSA's long-standing experience in partnership working and international collaboration to help stimulate enterprise and economic growth locally.

The new campus had hosted a number of well-attended events in recent months including a 10-day winter school that attracted 66 students from across Europe and a 4-day event attended by over 120 architecture students. Such events would raise the profile of teaching and research at the new campus and promote opportunities for networking internationally.

Outreach activities were a key objective for GSA at Altyre and partnership initiatives had been entered into with several schools in the Highlands and Islands:- including Bowmore School (Islay), Nairn Academy and the following Forres-based schools:- Anderson School, Rudolf Steiner School and Forres Academy. The GSA team at Forres had also established a close working relationship with UHI (the University of the Highlands and Islands.)

[The Panel **commended** GSA on the effective partnership working it had demonstrated in bringing the Altyre project to fruition. In particular, its collaboration with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Historic Scotland, the management of the Altyre Estate and also its engagement with the local community e.g. the creation of the GSA shop in Forres High Street.

[The Panel **commended** GSA on the vision and sense of purpose it had brought to the project. GSA had seen the potential which existed at the original site for students and staff to work closely with both the local area and artisan community while, at the same time, maintaining international links and perspectives via summer/winter schools].

3. Buildings and Facilities

Set within a 13,000 acre country estate, the Altyre campus is centred around a courtyard which has been redeveloped in keeping with the existing architecture and landscape. The complex consists of three renovated 19th century Italianate buildings (A, B and C) and imaginative conservation and building work has transformed these into a modern bespoke teaching facility. A fourth, as yet, undeveloped building could be renovated in future. The unique Grade A listed Blairs Farm Steading (part of the site and designed by Archibald Simpson in 1835) has been described by Historic Scotland as “a most unusual complex of outstanding interest”³. GSA’s intention is that the buildings themselves, restored and developed with the guidance of Historic Scotland will become a ‘pedagogical tool’ for art, architecture and design studies.

The buildings have been demarcated according to their proposed use:

- Building A will house administrative staff and includes 1 disability and 2 unisex toilets. It also includes a server room with both a computer server stored in a raised wall-mounted cabinet and a cleaner’s sink. The Panel was satisfied that there was sufficient existing separation between these facilities but noted that as a dual purpose room its future use should be monitored carefully;
- Building B includes a 20m long technical workshop with three areas zoned using a traffic light system to indicate the potential work hazard associated with each activity in the room e.g. wood-turning; silver-smithing and drilling. The building also includes 2 male toilets and 1 shower, 2 female toilets and 1 shower and 1 disabled toilet. It also houses a 45m long studio where all teaching staff (other than Professor McAra-McWilliam) and students will be based;
- Building C includes a welcome area and a public engagement and exhibition space, 1 unisex toilet and 1 disabled toilet. There is also a tower above the building which will be closed due to the presence of a bat colony.

Each building has a kitchen area for food preparation but it was noted that GSA also had a connection with a local supplier who could provide a food ordering service as and when required. In the longer term, the fourth building could be developed to include a café and social space (subject to student numbers). Access to the three renovated buildings is via a secure digital entry system.

The buildings all have Ethernet connections at every second power-point, locally controlled underfloor heating and an accessible entrance with ramps where appropriate. There is dimmable lighting in all areas except the workshop which has strip lighting and all buildings have windows and good natural light.

Although the Altyre Estate includes a working farm, the campus has its own entry and exit routes. This designated thoroughfare makes it less likely that students and staff will encounter farm machinery. The Panel was assured that the need for a common sense approach when moving around the estate would be impressed upon students during induction.

The Horizon campus effects will be moved to Altyre over a two day period in late August 2016, with audio-visual and wifi equipment being installed on 22nd August. The campus has a 200MB ‘unbreakable’ superfast fibre connection in place with the capacity to reach 1GB speed. The hardwiring is all complete and consultations have been undertaken with GSA IT staff to plan the fit for the buildings. The Panel was assured that the audio-visual equipment was fitted to the same specification as the equipment at GSA Glasgow.

Adjacent to the complex is a large pond and a historic wooden church which belongs to the owner of the Altyre Estate (Sir Alastair Gordon Cumming).

A separate Biomass unit with two generators provides power to the campus.

[The Panel **recommended** that the tower above Building C be kept locked at all times and appropriate No Entry warning signs displayed to avoid potential health risks from the bat colony, dust and the unknown structural integrity of the wooden staircase. Furthermore, the Panel **recommended** that there be clear signage to dissuade people from entering all undeveloped buildings on campus and adjacent residential/farm areas].

[The Panel **commended** GSA on the standard of the redevelopment work undertaken at Altyre which was both authentic and in keeping with the original architecture and character of the estate. The result was a building which successfully brought together old and new in a unique learning environment.]

4. Health and Safety

The Panel noted the following points in relation to Health and Safety:-

- The nature of the work undertaken on campus would necessitate the use of workshops and technical equipment. Each building was fitted with accessible alarm-activators, fire exits, a range of fire extinguishers and the workshop areas were provided with extraction systems. The local fire authority had checked the buildings and was satisfied that appropriate fire safety measures were in place;
- The GSA Health and Safety Officer made regular visits to the campus and the GSA workshop supervisor would provide induction training for users of technical equipment in workshops;
[The Panel **recommended** that a local safety committee be set up on site with members assigned relevant safety roles as appropriate];
- External lighting around the buildings and access routes was not observed during the visit.
[The Panel **recommended** that suitable lighting be installed on access routes (for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists) and around buildings (where appropriate) as soon as possible, and before the end of British summertime];
- The pond area was fairly close to the access road to the car-park and the Panel considered that this might represent a potential safety hazard, particularly in winter.
[The Panel **recommended** that the pond area be demarcated clearly by the installation of markers and a small, vehicle-resistant barrier for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. In addition, appropriate signage and a safety lifebelt (or similar) should be installed here as a precautionary measure];
- The panel was assured that lone working would not normally be allowed on campus. The usual hours of business would be from 9am to 6pm, with exceptions only permitted by special arrangement, for example in preparation for a design show;
- [Given the fairly remote location of the campus, the Panel **recommended** that there be a single point of contact available for staff, students and general public/emergency services e.g. a janitor/receptionist/security officer or other member of staff – with access to the keys, codes etc of all buildings on campus];
- [Furthermore, the Panel **recommended** that CCTV be installed at the main road entrance to the campus (in the event that listed building restrictions prevented cameras from being positioned on campus buildings)];
- [As there was currently no security presence on campus, the Panel **recommended** that GSA monitor the use of space and buildings over the coming session, and take appropriate proportionate action, if necessary, to have a security officer/s on-site];
- [The Panel **recommended** that regular risk assessments of equipment (eg Display Screen Equipment) should be undertaken in compliance with local safety rules].

[NB - The Panel was aware that some of the above recommendations may already have been addressed or would be in place by the arrival of the first students].

5. Transport

The Panel was advised that local transport to the campus was available from the town of Forres and a regular train service operated from Inverness to Forres. A minibus from Forres station to the campus operated in the morning, at lunchtime, and again at the end of the day. Most staff had cars and two car parks were under construction - a large one to the rear of the buildings and separate disabled parking at the front. GSA was also considering putting in place an extended taxi service with a local operator with whom they already had close links.

Car-sharing would be encouraged amongst staff and students who brought their own cars on campus. The Panel was advised that cycling on the main road from Forres to the campus was not advised due to traffic concerns and it would be impressed upon students to use a quieter road at the back of the estate to access the campus.

6. Student Experience

The Panel noted that a student induction week would take place in Week 0. As part of this, students would be given an introduction to the local area, facilities and places of interest. They would also be given a copy of the GSA Campus Guide to Student Facilities and Services in Moray. This document outlined local services, accommodation and amenities including details of healthcare provision and emergency services. The induction week would take place in the same week as the local Findhorn Festival, a six day celebration of arts and culture across Morayshire.

In Week 2, Forres-based students would go to the GSA Glasgow campus to meet with other Masters students. This initial face-to-face contact would be supplemented through opportunities for video-conferencing sessions where students would critique one another's work.

Summer and winter schools would also provide opportunities to engage with other students on different programmes. In future, it was possible that GSA architecture students, along with Moray Council and other GSA students, would help co-design student accommodation on campus. It was noted that, at present, most students found accommodation in the town of Forres. Some accommodation had also been made available to students at the nearby Kinloss Barracks.

The Panel acknowledged that students working in conjunction with each other and the local community was a good example of cross-discipline collaboration and partnership working. The experience gained from such activities might also form the basis of student projects or student exchange activities in future.

The immediate past-President of the GSA Student Association (Lewis Prosser) had visited Altyre and staff were in regular liaison with the new President (Laura Glennie). Given that there were currently no social facilities for students at Altyre, the Student Association was looking to engage with local social and sports organisations in the Forres area. It was noted that Inverness had many city amenities and was less than a 30 minute train journey from Forres. Elgin, also, had a good range of social and leisure facilities and was less than 15 minutes away.

GSA was also considering sponsoring occasional events such as cinema evenings which would be open to the general public.

[The Panel **commended** GSA on its efforts to promote a student-centred vision for the new campus. This was evidenced by GSA's willingness to have students involved in

campus developments e.g. the design of campus accommodation and other future projects].

7. Quality Assurance and Student Feedback

The Panel was advised that the same quality assurance and enhancement processes, structures and policies that operated at GSA Glasgow would also apply at Altyre.

The Altyre team did not anticipate having to modify existing academic policies in any way in order to accommodate issues that might arise from Altyre's geographic location. Supervisory meetings for research students would be undertaken in person or via e-mail or Skype.

With regards to assessment and feedback, final Exam Boards would require physical attendance of the relevant Board member/s and a representative from Registry as currently happens for Singapore (SIT) exam boards - with resit board meetings conducted via Skype.

Student appeals, complaints and cases of academic misconduct would be dealt with centrally through the GSA Glasgow Registry.

In terms of quality assurance procedures, students at Altyre will be invited to complete national student surveys and would have the opportunity to participate in Staff/Student Committee meetings once a term (once a semester from session 2017-18).

8. Student Support Services

Student support and pastoral services would be provided at both campuses (Glasgow and Altyre) by Student Support Services and Dr Hush's team. The following services would be provided:

- A fortnightly cross-programme pastoral support event;
- A fortnightly event at which Dr Hush or other programme leader would visit Altyre to support students with any academic issues they might have;
- An opportunity to meet with GSA Student Support Services during the Week 2 induction event in Glasgow. This session would be led by Jill Hammond, Head of Student Support Services.

Altyre staff expected that the nature of the working environment in Building B in which students and staff would work in close proximity would ensure there would be regular opportunities for the discussion of academic and pastoral issues. There would not be a student advisor as such, but a studio leader who would be available to meet with students individually or in a small group as required.

Regarding personal health and safety, two members of Altyre staff had completed mental health training and all had received first aid training. Information concerning emergency procedures was outlined in the GSA Campus Guide to Student Facilities and Services in Moray and all students would be advised to register with the local GP surgery in Forres on arrival. Either a session would be organised for GPs to visit Altyre to inform the students about the availability of medical services or students would be accompanied on a trip to the local GP surgery in Forres. It was noted that there was also a community hospital in Forres and larger hospitals in both Elgin and Inverness.

9. Centrally Provided Services

i Administrative Services

The Panel was informed that the following services would be provided centrally and would utilise the same systems and procedures as that utilised by GSA Glasgow:-

- Programme applications;
- Enrolment;
- Student records management, including the production of transcripts/HEARs;
- Registry services (including status/bank/Council Tax letters):- discussions had already taken place with Moray Council regarding the electronic transfer of student data for Council Tax exemption purposes;
- Financial information and advice for students:- students at Altyre would be entitled to apply to appropriate GSA hardship funds in the same way as GSA Glasgow students;
- Tier 4 monitoring:- attendance of Tier 4 students at Altyre would be monitored internally in liaison with module leaders. Liaison had already taken place between GSA and UKVI to ensure that the necessary approvals were in place regarding Tier 4 Licence arrangements at the new campus; and
- Support for Equality and Diversity (through Student Support Services).

The Panel was also assured that regular meetings would take place between Ms Allison (GSA Glasgow) and Ms McInnes (GSA Forres) to review on-going operational matters at Altyre.

ii *Learning Resources*

The Panel was informed that a virtual learning environment (VLE) would be delivered via a centrally provided Moodle service although consideration was being given to migrating to the Canvas VLE.

Students would have access to e-journals and e-books provided by the GSA Glasgow library and this would be supplemented by a small collection of printed materials at Altyre. Staff were investigating the possibility of utilising inter-library loans between campuses.

A small computer cluster would be installed on 21-22 August 2016 comprising 4-6 networked PCs, to the same technical specification as similar equipment at GSA Glasgow.

iii *Academic Staff Development*

The Panel heard that Forres-based staff would have the same opportunity for academic staff development as that offered to staff at GSA Glasgow with an assessment of need agreed with individual line managers. The nature of the delineated teaching teams meant that an element of peer mentoring would happen naturally. Staff would also be supported in gaining professional accreditation such as membership of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Some staff were already undertaking an appropriate postgraduate certificate or supervisory qualification.

10. Meeting with Post-Doctoral Researchers and Postgraduate Student

The Panel met informally with several post-doctoral researchers at the Horizon campus who outlined their digital innovation work in relation to healthcare and community engagement. All the researchers seemed highly motivated by their work and its potential to impact positively on the local communities.

The Panel also interviewed a PhD student at some length. The discussion highlighted the potential benefits of the PhD cohort scheme which enabled full-time PhD students to study as a cohort over three years. It was noted that although these students were widely distributed geographically, there were regular opportunities for them to come together and share their experience. Three summer/winter schools and 'roaming'

monthly meetings were organised by the student cohort themselves. Postgraduate students were welcome to attend research methods training at GSA Glasgow and the summer/winter schools also offered the opportunity to explore related topics more extensively.

The PhD student was excited to be one of the first cohort at Altyre and to be able to share responsibility for its future development with her peers. One of her first activities at Altyre would be to create a prototype exhibition in Building C.

She stressed, however, that prospective students needed to appreciate the nature of studying on a rural campus from the outset of their studies. Two of the seven enrolled students had left halfway through their first year and this had the potential to impact negatively on the rest of the PhD cohort. In spite of this, the student was extremely positive about the Altyre campus, the unique learning experience it offered and the strong possibilities afforded for community engagement.

It was recognised that there were strong student induction arrangements in place for new students at Altyre. [However, the Panel **recommended** that the benefits and challenges of studying at a rural campus be stressed to new students prior to enrolment and during induction, to help reduce unnecessary student withdrawals].

[The Panel **commended** GSA on developing the concept of the PhD 'cohort' and in particular how they had used this model to represent a small learning community (Forres) in action].

11. Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations and Commendations

Conclusion

The Panel was very impressed by the manner in which GSA staff, partner organisations and contractors had successfully transformed a 19th century building complex into a modern and innovative learning environment. The Panel concluded that the new Altyre campus was fit for purpose and indeed would open up many new and exciting possibilities for education, business and innovation in Morayshire and across the Highlands and Islands.

The University wishes GSA well on the opening of the new campus

Summary of Recommendations:

Security and Safety

1. The Panel **recommended** that the tower above Building C be kept locked at all times and appropriate No Entry warning signs displayed to avoid potential health risks from the bat colony, dust and the unknown structural integrity of the wooden staircase;
2. The Panel **recommended** that there be clear signage to dissuade people from entering all undeveloped buildings on campus and adjacent residential/farm areas;
3. The Panel **recommended** that a local safety committee be set up on site with members assigned to relevant safety roles as appropriate;
4. The Panel **recommended** that suitable lighting be installed on access routes (for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists) and around buildings (where appropriate) as soon as possible, and before the end of British summertime;
5. The Panel **recommended** that the pond area be demarcated clearly by the installation of markers and a small, vehicle-resistant barrier for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. In addition, appropriate signage and a safety lifebelt (or similar) should be installed here as a precautionary measure;

6. The Panel was assured that lone working would not normally be allowed on campus. The usual hours of business would be from 9am to 6pm, with exceptions only permitted by special arrangement, for example in preparation for a design show. Given the fairly remote location of the campus, the Panel **recommended** that there be a single point of contact available for staff, students and the general public/emergency services at all times e.g. a janitor/receptionist/security officer or other member of staff – with access to all keys, codes etc;
7. Furthermore, the Panel **recommended** that CCTV be installed at the main road entrance to the campus (in the event that listed building restrictions prevented cameras from being positioned on campus buildings);
8. As there was currently no security presence on campus, the Panel **recommended** that GSA monitor the use of space and buildings over the coming session, and take appropriate proportionate action, if necessary, to have a security officer/s on-site;
9. The Panel **recommended** that regular risk assessments of equipment (eg Display Screen Equipment) should be undertaken in compliance with local safety rules;

Student Experience

1. The Panel **recommended** that the benefits and challenges of studying at a rural campus be stressed to new students prior to enrolment and during induction to help reduce unnecessary student withdrawals.

Summary of Commendations:

1. The Panel **commended** GSA on the effective partnership working it had demonstrated in bringing the Altyre project to fruition. In particular, its collaboration with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Historic Scotland, the owner of the Altyre Estate and also its engagement with the local community, e.g. the creation of the GSA shop in Forres High Street;
2. The Panel **commended** GSA on the standard of the redevelopment work undertaken at Altyre which was both authentic and in keeping with the original architecture and character of the estate. The result was a building which successfully brought together old and new in a unique learning environment;
3. The Panel **commended** GSA on the vision and sense of purpose it had brought to the project. GSA had seen the potential which existed at the original site for students and staff to work closely with both the local area and artisan community while, at the same time, maintaining international links and perspectives via summer/winter schools;
4. The Panel **commended** GSA on its efforts to promote a student-centred vision for the new campus. This was evidenced by GSA's willingness to have students involved in campus developments e.g. the design of campus accommodation and other future projects; and
5. The Panel **commended** GSA on developing the concept of the PhD 'cohort' and in particular how they had used this model to represent a small learning community (Forres) in action.

Acknowledgements

The Panel would like to thank GSA staff and students at Horizon/Altyre campuses for their kind hospitality and for providing the Panel members with information on request.

Sources

1. Glasgow School of Art Media Release – 12 May 2016
2. Glasgow School of Art Media Release (Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam) – 12 May 2016
3. Altyre Estate website