

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

PROGRAMME COURSE APPROVAL GROUP

21st November 2017

MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art):

Programme Leader: Mónica Núñez Laiseca

Approval Panel: Professor Ken Neil (Convenor), Professor Vicky Gunn, Ms Janet Allison, Ms Jill Hammond, Professor Alistair Payne, Ms Barbara Ridley, Dr Madeline Sclater, Dr Sarah Smith, Dr Alexandra Ross, Ms Sally Stewart, Ms Mónica Núñez Laiseca, Professor Nick Pearce, Professor Elizabeth Moignard, Dr Deborah Jackson, Ms Hanna Hamdache, Ms Sheila Kay, Dr Gordon Hush, Mr Alan Hooper, Mr Colin Kirkpatrick.

Secretary: Mr Gordon Brady, Academic Registry

Apologies: Mr Patrick Macklin, Mr Robert Mantho, Ms Shona Paul, Mr Gordon McLoughlin, Dr Vanessa Johnson

21/11/17.01 Welcome and overview

The Convenor welcomed members to the meeting of the UPC Programme Approval Group for the Master of Letters in Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art).

After introductions, the Convenor asked the Programme Leader to explain the general nature of the amendments and the reasoning therein, as outlined in Paper 1.6 *MLitt Curatorial Practice Amendments Overview*.

The principal drivers for the changes to the programme were taken from student feedback and the need within the programme for a better balance between theory and practice. The collaboration between Glasgow School of Art and the University of Glasgow had provided the basis for the improvements and highlighted the usefulness of peer critique. The changes would allow the programme to better reflect students' individual interests within curation and give them the potential to develop their work and progression into a practice based PhD. In re-writing the programme documents, attention had been given to adapting the narrative and explaining the calibration, details such as student contact time and credit structure.

Dr Ross, lecturer in Contemporary Art and Curation at the University of Glasgow, reiterated that the integration of theory and practice was essential for this programme, adapting it to a better fit across semesters giving an improved student experience. The programme needs to be able to adapt to the diverse mix of experience levels in each student cohort and the adjustment to the corresponding timelines relates to and allows differing levels of personal growth. This 'hybridity' on the programme could be better accommodated with the dissertation format.

It was also suggested that the programme could build on its relationships with city partners giving students a unique opportunity to develop their practice.

The External Advisor, Dr Jackson, commended the team on the wealth of work it had undertaken in getting the documentation to this stage. She further commented that this was leading the programme in a strong direction towards a more industry oriented amalgam of theory and practice. The local sensibility in terms of partner relations was important and the credit weighting review was long overdue.

21/11/17.02 Programme Amendments

The Convenor invited the Programme Leader to run through the main amendments in order to provide more of an overview of the development of the programme:

1. **“Replacing the unit Research Methods in Practice (PCUR102, 20 credits, UoG), with SoFA’s upcoming Research Methods and Methodologies in Practice course (20 credits, GSA). This course will begin running in 2018-19 and explores research as central to the development of contemporary arts practice.**
2. **New credit structure.** From 2017-18 all PGT courses are required to be multiples of 20 credits. Only Stage 2 is affected, where the credits of Curatorial Practice 2 (PCUR201) will be reduced from 45 to 40 credits, whereas GSA’s elective courses will increase from 15 to 20 credits.
3. **Adapting the learning narrative and teaching methods in the core courses Curatorial Practice 1 (Stage 1, PCUR101) and Curatorial Practice 2 (Stage 2, PCUR201), in order to enable a more productive balance between theory and practice.** In the original programme document, Curatorial Practice 1 (PCUR101) is designed to give a broad introduction to curating, including historical, whereas Curatorial Practice 2 (PCUR201) focuses primarily on professional skills and project-based work. Maintaining a balance between theory and practice across both units seems more engaging for students, and a better way to integrate different perspectives and learning situations to support the development of students’ curatorial practices.

We are seeking to review the **learning narrative**, so that:

a) PCUR101:

- Provides a historical introduction to curating and explores different curatorial positions in relation to specific local, socio-demographic and institutional contexts, including Glasgow;
- Students will be asked to work in groups to curate self- initiated projects that engage with the contemporary in their immediate environment.

b) PCUR201:

- Shifts the focus towards curating as a form of research and the exploration of a broad spectrum of modalities of practice;
- Students will be supported to either individually curate self-initiated projects or to undertake live briefs at partner institutions (such as The Hunterian Art Gallery and Museum, GoMA, Platform...), tailored to their individual interest, and to position their own work in relation to a wider field of practice.

Upon approval of this proposal from the Executive Group, individual course descriptions and ILOs will be revised, following this rationale.

As far as **teaching methods** are concerned, in order to ensure a more productive balance between theory and practice, there needs to be a mix of lecture-based and workshop teaching across PCUR101 and PCUR201. At the moment there are only 5 hours for lectures in PCUR101, and no lectures programmed in PCUR201.

4. **Reviewing course descriptors for the units Master's Project (Option 1 – PCUR301, Option 2 – PCUR302) and Dissertation (PCUR303).** This will be a light edit, which looks to establish the parity of both options and how they are used to assess learning in the field of curatorial practice.
5. **Simplifying assessment.** Currently students are asked to produce **three** summative assignments for PCUR101 and PCUR201, respectively: a curatorial project (which counts 50% towards the final mark) and two written assignments (with word-counts ranging from 2,000 to 3,500 words).

We are looking to propose a simplified assessment pattern with **only two** summative assignments per course, one being a project and the other a piece of writing, and introduce a formative point for each so students can receive feedback while their ideas are still developing and learning taking place.

In Stage 3, we are looking to **reduce the word-counts** for the Dissertation and the Master's Project Essay in order to match the word-counts used in MLitt programmes at UoG's School of Art and Creative Cultures."

21/11/17.03 General Commentary and Actions

The Head of the School of Fine Art remarked that the course was now 4 years old and was getting an opportunity to reflect and develop in a bespoke manner using the student feedback as guidance.

The three modes of assessment in stage 3 reflect the need for ethics and health and safety guidance across the Independent Learning Outcomes.

The structure now has stricter word count guidance with, for example, 5,000 at SCQF level 11 being equivalent to 20%; 7,500 words being equivalent to 50% and 15,000 being equivalent to 100%.

There was a brief discussion about the language of the programme specification and its purpose as a 'front-facing' document. It was suggested that there should be more of a shift from academic facing to student facing friendly text. This prompted a discussion of whether the programme specifications documents were for students or for applicants. It was suggested a more useful method of engaging with applicants was the introduction of a publication specifically designed for applicants and recruitment with the specification documents being more relevant for students. It was commented that these documents 'date' very quickly. The roles of these documents, as split between the programme handbook, specification documents, a possible flyer and the website was discussed with a particular focus on where Quality Assurance style text was appropriate or not.

The structure and purpose of bibliographies across the course specification documents was debated. It was highlighted that only having a link to reading lists on Canvas (VLE) did not allow applicants to access these materials. It was proposed that applicants could request a list of 'pre-arrival texts' from the Programme Leader. It was proposed that the pre-arrival bibliography is maintained by the academic team, on the dedicated programme page, on the School's website.

Secretary's note: These actions have been superseded by discussions at PACAAG:

- The template for Programme and Course specifications should be updated to remove 'indicative' from Bibliography section. Schools must determine if the list should include core texts, suggested reading, and/or sources of information. Any texts should be listed in the Harvard referencing style. A link to the reading list on CANVAS should also be provided.

The significance of the type of language used in the programme specification and how it impacts on recruitment was discussed. It was generally agreed that the current text might not encourage interest from international applicants. How the staff assess applicants' critical engagement was queried and interview practice was cited as a generally convincing method. Internationalisation across the School of Fine Art's recruitment should support students' own context or backgrounds. These connections should be explored, beyond the UK and Europe. It was agreed that the text in the Entry Requirements, Section 8.3 of the Programme Specification should be amended to include the statement "relevant to the applicant's cultural context" after "A good level of understanding of contemporary art".

This statement should also be referenced in the Equality Impact Assessment for the programme.

The conditions that arose as part of these discussions and affect the paperwork were:

8.3 Entry Qualifications (Other):

Be edited to reflect the International aspect of the cohort. The phrase 'relevant to the applicant's cultural context' should be inserted after "A good level of understanding of contemporary art".

Reference this section in the Equality Impact Assessment.

9. Programme Scope:

It was pointed out that this section uses the 'enabling' verb tense, but then varies tenses later in the section. Consistency was called for to avoid confusion.

10.2 Stage 2 Aims:

It was highlighted that the phrase "have the option of undertaking a 'live' project" is ambiguous and it was asked that more precision is applied to this sentence in order to eliminate potential student confusion.

In section 2 of 10.2: Elective Courses (20 Credits), it was highlighted that this should be expanded to include Elective Course options from across Glasgow School of Art and the whole of the College of Arts at the University of Glasgow.

16 Programme Structure and Features:

It was pointed out that the Semester(s) taught column of the table in this section refers to Semester Three as 'Summer' and it was asked that this is changed to Semester Three.

In the 'Regulations' section, the term 'Code of Practice' should be replaced with 'Code of Assessment'.

25(b) Student feedback and representation:

This should be updated to reflect the current format of student feedback and representation including the Student Voice and lead "Rep".

25(c) Programme based student support:

Learning Support should be amended to Student Support.

The second paragraph which references Good Cause is incorrect and should reference the Code of Assessment for information on the procedures relating to Good Cause; paragraphs three and four need to reflect current Student Support structure and role of the Head of Academic Registry. Guidance on appropriate wording can be discussed with the Head of Policy & Governance.

Conditions for Course Specifications

Section 24: Bibliography

Additional text to highlight that reading lists can be requested from the Programme Leader; potentially a four book list provided here.

General:

Course specifications should be updated to reflect any relevant amendments made to the Programme Specification to ensure consistency of information.

For example, changes to wording in 8.3, Entry Qualifications in the Programme Specification should be repeated in the Course Specification Entry Qualification, if appropriate.

21/11/2017.04 External Representative Comments

The Convenor invited Dr Jackson to speak and she lauded the programme for its direct industry and sector connectivity; the significance of the way that students who partake in external practice are not 'interns' but are directly engaging with their own processes and practices is a powerful strength. She further complimented staff on the way in which it is embedded that students are producing knowledge through action. Dr Jackson further commended the staff on their rigour and their obvious responses to student voices.

Dr Jackson suggested that the assessment criteria and the independent learning outcomes and aims could be clearer so students understand what they will be assessed against.

Professor Gunn agreed, stating that it was essential to avoid the coaching of students into an assessment style. Dr Jackson said that this point was also significant in terms of managing student expectations; for example, independent learning outcomes as guidance for students as opposed to the rubric of the programme text. The Convenor agreed, stating that this is an institutional issue that is being investigated at the moment. The programme handbook should clearly explain the connections as well as specifying the timeline for assessments.

Dr Jackson enquired if the level of detail in the overall specifications was too high; clarity and the weighting of the assessments is important and perhaps more simple guidance could be found from marking sheet descriptors. The programme's scope, in terms of how it reflects on processes and not just outcome or target related learning was commended and felt to be very worth retaining and building on.

Professors Pearce and Moignard applauded the programme's fluidity and how this was partially built into its documentation. They further agreed that the programme needs to further reflect the nature of curation as practice and not research.

21/11/2017.05 Student Representative Comments

The Convenor invited the Student Representative, Hanaa Hamdache, for her comments. She reiterated the importance of having the opportunity to develop your own practice and how this can be adopted within the programme boundaries and commended the staff team on the move to a single focussed assessment rather than dividing students' time across several topics. She also reflected on the lack of the direct relationship between the Research Methodologies course and contemporary art.

21/11/2017.06 The Convenor asked the group if they were happy to approve the changes to the programme specification, subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting and this was agreed.

21/11/2017.07 Any Other Business

The Convenor asked the staff present to please confirm their attendance or not at the next two days of meetings. The deadline for amendments to the programme documentation would need to be the 30th of November, due to the need to present the documents again for the Academic Council.

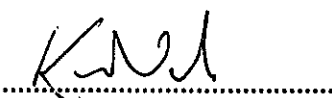
[Action: Programme leader]

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Satisfaction of Conditions

I confirm that the conditions listed above have been addressed in full.

Professor Alistair Payne 

Date: 6th December 2017

Professor Ken Neil: 

Date: 6/12/17

Please e-mail a copy of this document (typing a signature will suffice) to the Panel Convenor (k.neil@gsa.ac.uk) and Policy and Governance (l.davidson@gsa.ac.uk), by **6 December 2017** to ensure subsequent consideration by Academic Council.

Explanation of Terminology (as approved by Academic Council)

Conditions: All conditions must be satisfied before the programme can be validated. Recommendations: The Programme Team is asked to report after one year, unless otherwise specified, on the progress made in addressing these.