



## Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

**Title:** The cross-school course (first year) – Glasgow School of Art:

**Transition(s) the practice supports:** *Induction:* introducing first year students to the city of Glasgow, the art school and its creative processes, and their peer group.

**Abstract:** The cross-school course is a credit-bearing course that takes place over two weeks during term one of the first year for students from across the whole of the art school (art, design, and architecture). Students are split into mixed-discipline groups of around seven, assigned a tutor, and given a brief that requires them to engage with the City and work together to produce a piece of work which is subsequently exhibited to and discussed amongst the cohort in a crit. Students are also required to keep a reflective journal. The project aims to introduce students to the City, to other first year students, and to aspects of the creative and learning processes that are common to all disciplines at the art school, such as: peer-learning, drawing, researching, presenting and testing ideas, critical and reflective thinking.

### **Description:**

Managing the tensions between developing as a specialist in an Art, Design and Architecture discipline at the same time as interacting across the disciplines is a central educational aspect of GSA. As an institution GSA has maintained its identity for specialisation at the undergraduate level but has ensured that first and second years in particular benefit from the cross-fertilisation of formal cross-discipline curricular activities. The cross-school course is a credit-bearing course that takes place over two weeks during the first term of the first year. It is the second project that students will engage with after enrolling at the art school. For many this period marks a key transition stage from secondary to third level education.

Around 380 students from across the whole of the art school (art, design, and architecture) are split into mixed discipline groups of about seven and assigned a tutor. Each group is given a brief that requires them to engage with some part of the City and work together collaboratively to produce a piece of work. This work is subsequently exhibited to the cohort and discussed in group critiques at the end of the two-week period. As part of the cross-school course students also have to produce their own reflective journal. The project is supported by thematic (e.g. utopian cities) and also pragmatic (e.g. collaborative working and presentation skills) lectures.

*Aspiration/ key points/principles:*

Through the project students get to meet and make friends with other students from across the art school and orientate themselves with the GSA campus as they visit the spaces in which students from other departments work. By engaging with the City students also become more familiar with their immediate environment and gain the confidence to visit exhibitions and archives within the area – something crucial to supporting practice during their time at the art school. By working on projects with students of other disciplines the project aims to give them experience early on negotiating the type of collaborative working environment they may find themselves in during their time at art school as well as later on in a professional context.

The practical components of the project such as creating and exhibiting work and keeping a reflective journal, are designed to familiarise students with aspects of the creative and learning processes that are common to all disciplines at the art school, including: peer-learning, drawing, researching, presenting and testing ideas, critical and reflective thinking. Furthermore, the journal requires 750 words and a source list that contains at least two book sources. This aims to introduce students to the academic and written element of their degree.

*Observations/ challenges/ recommendations for future work:*

The exhibition for this course is not centred on any individual location within GSA. Whilst this presents problems in terms of ownership, it also enables the creative use of a range of spaces within GSA. Locational aesthetics<sup>1</sup> have been high on the educational agenda of Art Schools across Europe over the last two years and questions regarding how exhibitions and galleries function to maintain inequity or challenge it have been part of this conversation. Though not a formal aspect of the cross-school course as it stands and clearly administratively difficult (increasingly so given the need to do rapid Health & Safety and Risk Assessments for exhibition), the idea of nomadism that is potentially experienced by students is perhaps one that we could draw out further.

Staff recognise the specific challenges of this course, including the time to revisit the assessment processes. Next year staff are considering running an introductory session on the purpose of the critique as so far this has been overlooked and some students struggle to get the most out of this process. Staff suggested that another cross-school course takes place at the end of the third year where students come together with increased knowledge of their disciplines to work together – this would have a professional practice focus.

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**All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.artandeducation.net/announcement/13th-elia-biennial-conference-location-aesthetics/>