

GSA SUMMARY REPORT OF EQUALITY CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY IMPACT

Date of Assessment:	30 OCTOBER 2017	
School or Executive Group Area:	SCHOOL OF FINE ART	
Department:	MFA PROGRAMME	
Lead member of staff: e-mail:	Henry Rogers h.rogers@gsa.ac.uk	
Area of decision making/title of policy, procedure, programme or relevant practice:	MFA PROGRAMME	
Please indicate if this is:	New:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Existing/Reviewed:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>1.Summary of how equality, diversity and participation have been considered and due regard given to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):</p> <p>The MFA programme (2 years full-time) is the longest standing (c. 30 years) postgraduate programme in the School of Fine Art and this report reflects upon the academic year 2016-2017 in relationship to the data gathered in previous academic years.</p> <p>Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment at this point in time offers an opportunity to consider the potential for enhancement of the programme alongside established and continuing good practice with regard to mainstreaming equality within the programme. Due regard has been given to the Public Sector Equality Duty: Equality Act 2010 (PSED) and the impact on the protected characteristic groups has been considered in relationship to the statistical evidence provided by Registry, the credit reform process and periodic review.</p>		
<p>2.Evidence used to make your assessment:</p> <p>Equality monitoring data suggests consistently diverse cohorts on this programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2016-17 60% of the intake is international, - 26% of current students identify as Black, Asian or Minority ethnic (15% of these students are UK domiciled); - 41% of the cohort identify as male: a steady increase from 33% in 2013-14. - A significant majority of students have no religion or belief although students of faith including Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh, and spiritual are represented. - The percentage of students disclosing disability has decreased from 36% in 2013-14 to 18% in 2016-17. More than 80% of disclosures have consistently related to: two or more disabling conditions or specific learning differences. - 22% of the 2016-17 cohort identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other (information refused 34%) in comparison to 7% in 2013-14 (information refused 20%). - In 2016-17: 78% of the cohort were in the age range 25-39 with no students aged 21 and 18% aged 22-24 indicating a continued trend. - <p>The evidence used to assess the MFA Programme includes:</p>		

- successive PMAR Equality and Diversity Statistical evidence relating to recruitment and the demography of students joining the programme from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017, with reference to the PSED;
- reflection on all aspects of the MFA programme (in view of the pending credit reform and periodic review 2018) including: the MFA programme ethos and position statement, applications and recruitment, the interview process, progression, inductions, curriculum design, progress through the programme, delivery and learning and teaching strategies, assessment, research and professional practice;
- consultation with staff and students as the credit reform and periodic review process has unfolded;
- Consideration of the recruitment strategy with regard to protected characteristics;
- External Examiner's Report (2016-2017).

3. Outline any positive or negative impacts you have identified:

MFA Programme Ethos (Position Statement) – Positive equality impact

Contemporary Fine Art practice is so wide ranging in its forms, and subject to such a diverse range of influences, as to make any single or simple definition problematic. Throughout the 20th Century, and the first two decades of the 21st Century, the revolution in means of communication and technological development has opened up whole new areas of investigation in which artists test out the potential of the 'new' through experimentation.

The interchange and debate made possible by contemporary means of communication, most evident in social media and the online sharing of ideas alongside the burgeoning of new media, materials and processes in studio practice, has been paralleled by an equally significant expansion in the concerns, issues and content that artists have sought to address. The multi-cultural nature of contemporary society has also had a significant impact upon the nature of artistic practice and research and the development of art practice in relationship to historical, theoretical and philosophical discourse.

With this in mind, the MFA programme is founded upon the conviction that contemporary fine art practice has a dynamic and symbiotic relationship with fine art education, in which the exploration of art's historical precedents, contemporary theories and philosophical debates are considered within regional, national and international contexts. This underpins an educational experience appropriate to intellectual enhancement and professional practice in preparation for life as a professional artist, artist-researcher or other related career sequels.

Towards a Critical Difference

Contemporary fine art practice often questions established conventions, assumptions and preconceptions and frequently challenges the boundaries of what is commonly understood as art practice itself. Within the context of the MFA the emphasis is placed on the importance of imagination and our commitment to the work of art as not only a philosophical speculation and a viable form of embodied knowledge but also a generative site in which meaning accrues. Furthermore, as artists frequently adopt positions that reflect upon, challenge or celebrate many aspects of contemporary society, art can also be viewed as a potential agent or thought provoking catalyst for change. With this in mind contemporary fine art practice in all its forms is constantly under review and subject to critical evaluation by its practitioners and critics in relationship to its public audience.

In view of this, and the MFA's longstanding commitment to multidisciplinary approaches to practice

within the context of the studio and studio based culture, artists are invited to explore the diversity of media and practices available to them. The MFA is defined through disciplines and their expanded fields where both inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches to practice are actively encouraged, for while the former articulates existing disciplines by working between them, the latter signals their potential dissolution.

Within this context contemporary fine art practice is interpreted in its broadest sense within the complex and subtle conceptual framework of *critical difference*. A framework in which the intersectional dynamics of our identities across *age, race, gender, sex and sexuality, disability, faith, class and geographical location*, inform a radical rethinking of pluralism. A subtlety of thought is now demanded when negotiating the complexity of the human subject, our ethical responsibilities to one another, and our shared experience in the world. To put it succinctly, the MFA fosters an international *community of others* in which its interlocutors have curious minds and a sense of adventure.

Observation

The MFA Programme Ethos testifies to the programme team's commitment to ensuring that the programme maintains its diversity within the context of 'critical difference'. Notably, in addition to the diversity indicated through equality monitoring, the MFA programme attracts students from the city, regionally, nationally (both within the context of Scotland and RUK), Europe (inc. Finland, France, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Poland) and internationally (inc. Australia, Canada, China, Iran, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, USA). Currently 60% of the cohort is from out with the UK makes the MFA programme unique in relationship to the postgraduate provision within SoFA.

Applications – Potential to promote positive impact

Statistical data with regard to the demography of applications received and offers made was not available at the point of writing this report.

Observation

Such information is important for only by analysing the statistical evidence of applications in relationship to the offers made and then considering such evidence in relationship to the cohorts actually joining the MFA programme can any positive and/or negative pattern in the offers made (rather than recruitment) be identified.

It must also be acknowledged here that in 2017 whilst the selection panel invited a diverse number of candidates to interview giving careful consideration to all aspects of each application and whilst an appropriate number of places were offered to candidates from diverse backgrounds, many of those offered places chose to go to another institution rather than take up the offer made by the MFA programme at GSA. Student choice therefore becomes a contributing factor in the recruitment process and may impact on the perceived equality and diversity of any given cohort.

However, we can confidently say that the high number of applications for the MFA from both Home/EU and Overseas candidates is driven by the reputation of the programme and the commitment of staff to not only multidisciplinary in practice but also the specificity of each individual student's experience within the context of 'critical difference' through the exploration of the student's own individual programme of study that is often (not always) informed by the specificities of their cultural heritage.

Action: Define and implement a mechanism at programme/school level to obtain feedback from applicants that choose to study elsewhere about the reasons for that choice.

Recruitment and the Interview Process – Potential to promote positive impact

The incoming Programme Leader was involved in all interviews for the 2017-2018 intake, and was thus able to observe the gathered field process as it unfolded. This is a longstanding way of interviewing prospective MFA students and whilst it has stood the MFA programme in good stead

until now, it is no longer appropriate within the contemporary world. We appear to be living in a world of immediacy, a world in which people's expectations are that those they communicate with will be immediately responsive, therefore people now clearly expect a swift response to their application, and the processing of it.

The current practice of offering applicants, whose practice and interest will be better served by the MLit in Fine Art Practice an interview for that programme as an alternative postgraduate route is also disrupted by the gathered field process.

The practice of conducting telephone interviews has been discontinued. All candidates who cannot attend interview in person are interviewed via SKYPE. Notwithstanding the problem of weak signals in certain parts of the world this has been very effective in ensuring a more equitable interview experience for all.

Observations

It is noted that comparable statistical evidence with which to explore the demography of the cohorts taking up the offer of a place in relationship to the diversity of the offers made to interviewees is required and this is currently a gap in our evidence base.

Action: In liaison with Registry develop appropriate mechanisms for systematic collection and use of differentiated data on applications, interviews, offers and acceptances.

Direct progression from undergraduate has historically been regarded as inappropriate – which in itself is prejudicial - and the incoming programme leader discussed this with staff during the selection process. Candidates coming direct from undergraduate were shortlisted and invited to interview as part of the 2017 application. However, while people often performed well, when looking at parity with other candidates it was clear that others wrote stronger applications (perhaps understandably so), presented their work more effectively and performed better at interview. The question that arises here is with regard to positive action within a widening participation agenda.

Furthermore, as noted above in the 2016-2017 interview cycle it became clear that whilst taking a balanced and considered approach to the offers made it is the decisions that the interviewees themselves make that determines the makeup of the cohort. Further qualitative data is therefore needed on the applicant experience.

Action: Develop and implement systematic feedback mechanism for all applicants about their experience.

Good Practice:

- Responsiveness to candidates' enquiries and personal visits demonstrating a strong working partnership between students and staff;
- Careful consideration of all applications by staff team;
- Identifying candidates who may be more suitable for the discipline specific MLitt pathways and informing the MLitt staff team and HOS; thus providing alternative routes.
- Interviews via SKYPE;

Issues:

- Delay in processing applications as a consequence of the gathered field;
- Resulting impact on applicants who wish to be interviewed for the MLitt programme as an alternative route;
- Lack of progression in from UG;

Actions:

- All applications will be processed in accordance with GSA policy;
- Include MLitt staff in interviews where appropriate to avoid interviewing candidates twice;
- Continue to give due consideration of direct progression from UG and explore with the SoFA Senior Management Team the issues of professional practice at UG which may need to be

addressed and implement appropriate measures to address them;

Inductions – Positive impact

Upon arrival MFA students have the opportunity to attend both general GSA (inc. technical workshops, library and student services) and programme specific inductions alongside meet and greet events. This is further supported in Week 1 by student-led Pecha Kucha presentations in which both year 1 and 2 present their work to each other. This two-day event helps the groups to begin to gel and for people to see where synergies may happen. In Week 2 for year1 this is followed by the Critical Reappraisal sessions that invite students to make a more significant presentation of their work to the year 1 group and the staff team. Both students and staff assist the student presenting work to think through the potential for future development. This provides each student with ways of initiating discussion about their trajectory as they begin to define their own personalised programme of study. All of this functions well thus enabling students to get to know each other and settle into the rhythm of the programme.

Good Practice:

- Encouraging students to share their experiences and to engage in programme relevant activities to get to know each other;
- The presentation of work by Year 2 students gives the Year 1 cohort a sense of what is possible and also expected of them as they move through the programme;
- The Critical Reappraisal sessions begin the process of identifying potential areas for development;

Curriculum Design – Positive impact

The structure of the programme allows students to develop increasingly complex relationships between practice, theory and context. As they work their way through their individual programme of study they will be expected to become increasingly and progressively independent.

Although the three Stages of the programme imply a sense of progression (Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters), and indeed normally students have to successfully complete each Stage before progressing to the next, all three Stages are regarded as being at Masters level – SCQF Level 11. This means that the students' development takes place across all three Stages of the course and that while some will make huge leaps in their thinking in, say, Stage 1 others may develop more slowly across Stages 2 & 3. With this in mind the MFA Programme is designed to facilitate each student's needs regardless of protected characteristic or identity.

The MFA Programme has also been designed to enable students to challenge their preconceptions and enable them to enhance their existing knowledge by questioning, broadening and deepening it through their engagement with core courses, common research electives and GSA/UG electives. The intention is to enable students to strategically re-focus the concerns within their own particular field of study, and their engagement with historical and contemporary debates relevant to arts based research and/or professional practice and continuing professional development. Although the courses appear to be distinct students' engagement with the programme is considered to be holistic and more fluid. The programme offers students the opportunity to enhance their existing skills base, take on new practical skills, and develop their intellectual and critical capabilities.

As the student cohorts are diverse the programme is structured to value engagement with diversity through its ethos and the openness of its Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes. These include:

- The ability to demonstrate an appropriate response to the views and positions of others, and an ability to offer substantial constructive criticism to others.
- The ability to demonstrate good practice and co-operation when working in professional contexts, including working constructively with others in a variety of pedagogical, institutional and professional situations.

Observations – Promoting positive impact

The curriculum design of the programme is well established and facilitates the needs of all students

who join it. Each student determines the scope and nature of their own arts practice in relationship to contemporary debates and current practices. However, it is clear in the available programme literature that whilst there is reference to **Ethics** there is a need for a more robust framework for practice. This is also true of **Health & Safety**. **Professional Practice** was also identified by students as lacking relative to practical advice on how to function in the art world.

The MFA Core Course IV: Theorising Studio Practice submission point has been revised to avoid two submission points very close to each other. This is an important course with regard to issues of equality and diversity because it is focused on underpinning the student's work within an appropriate context and as noted in the MFA programme ethos this often deals '*critical difference...* and the intersectional dynamics of our identities across *age, race, gender, sex and sexuality, disability, faith, class and geographical location...* [indeed] the complexity of the human subject, our ethical responsibilities to one another, and our shared experience in the world'. This is a significant point at which the student's share their research with each other in a fuller and deeper way.

Good Practice:

- Programme designed to enable students to develop their own artistic practice within a supportive environment and critical context;
- Responsiveness to students' individual programmes of study and research undertaken within the context of 'critical difference';
- Sharing of ideas in both the TSP Proposal and Student Led Seminar Presentations;

Issues:

- Lack of robust statement on Ethical Good Practice in specifications and documentation;
- Lack of robust statement on Health & Safety in specifications;
- Lack of professional practice skills sessions on surviving in the art world;

Actions:

- Introduce a robust statement on Ethical Good Practice in specifications and documentation;
- Introduce a robust statement on Health & Safety in specifications;
- Introduce professional practice skills sessions in the form of Survival Strategies.

Delivery and Learning and Teaching Strategies – Positive impact

The programme is delivered through a variety of Learning and Teaching strategies appropriate to the aims and learning outcomes of the different Stages and Courses of the MFA Programme. A range of learning and teaching methods are employed throughout the programme, individual and group tutorial scenarios are considered to be the most effective means of supporting students in the development of their individual programmes of study. Tutorial support is conducted as an informed dialogue at the appropriate level.

Students are expected to self-direct their own learning and where appropriate develop their skills through collaborative approaches for practice and research if their work demands it. Diverse cohorts are accommodated through the learning and teaching strategies that enable the promotion of respect for the specificity of each individual student's experience, our shared rights and responsibilities and the requirement that we are, each of us, sensitive to the needs of others, whilst recognising that wider cultural, intellectual and ethical issues underpin each individual's concerns. Regardless of protected characteristics the MFA programme engenders the building of good relations between all students.

Observations

As noted above the relationship between academic staff and students is in part structured through the tutorial system. One-to-one tutorials are key to the development of each individual student's work. Staff meet with students on rotation and all students meet with each member of staff. This enables students to determine their own trajectory taking the aspects of advice given that they deem to be useful to them. There is no ownership of students by staff through the allocation of a

specific tutor. Group discussion is a means by which students can test out their work as it develops in a critical yet friendly setting. The student cohorts also run their own Crit Club to generate discussion beyond the formally organised events. This is also about sharing ideas. The various strategies employed enable students to share their knowledge and understanding, engagement with each other in order to establish their own sense of 'critical difference' and gain experience with regard to the enhancement of both key and transferable skills.

Good Practice:

- The employment of appropriate teaching strategies;
- Enabling students to explore the specificities of their differently critical positions and enhance their key and transferable skills in an equitable and supportive environment;
- Enabling students to work independently and within the context of a group;
- Enable students to share their knowledge and ideas from a diverse range of cultural perspectives.

Assessment – Positive impact

Formative appraisal and Summative assessment are timetabled at key points in the programme prior to the completion of each Stage. They are supported by assessment notes for guidance and briefing meetings. Assessment deadlines are now staggered at manageable intervals allowing for effective time management. Formative appraisals are set by the MFA staff team to help to guide students to understand how well they are progressing whilst they are studying on a course. Formative appraisal is essentially developmental, it is about developing students' reflective skills and is therefore about their own 'critical appraisal' than assessment. By means of the Progress Review, they are directly involved in Formative Assessment process. It does not involve grading it does not contribute directly to final grades. Formative assessment generates feedback from the MFA staff team which aims to help students to improve their work and critical skills towards their final, summative assessment, this feedback is sometimes called feed-forward.

Summative assessments are formal assessments in which the assessment panel assess students' work. This 'final' assessment for each stage of the programme is based upon and in reference to relevant Intended Learning Outcomes against which grades are awarded for all courses. Written feedback is presented on an assessment pro forma to ensure transparency of how a final mark was arrived at and areas for improvement. The degree classification is awarded on the results achieved in Stage 3 only. This supports student transition and contributes to equality of outcome.

Modes of Assessment – Positive impact

A range of assessment modes are used for the MFA programme which include: **Studio submission:** the presentation of a body of fine art practice in student's work spaces, supported by a digital portfolio and/or blog, other contextual material such as sketchbooks, journals, notebooks and relevant preparatory work. **Written submission:** Dissertation or equivalent negotiated submission accompanied by a Critical Evaluation document. **Interim and Final Shows:** presentation/exhibition of work.

Assessment Steps

A number of steps have become established for the assessment of study outcomes:

Step 1 Written Submissions

All submissions are first marked by the supervisor or elective tutor and second marked by another member of the core MFA staff team or in the case of electives another specialist tutor to assure consistency. Each marker assesses the work submitted independently and the final mark is agreed between the two assessors.

Practical Submissions

Normally a minimum of three members of the core MFA staff team are involved with the assessment of the outcomes of practice courses. Staff contributing to the assessment

process assess work individually prior to meeting to discuss each submission. It is at this point that the internal mark is agreed.

Step 2 Marks are subject to further scrutiny to establish and maintain parity but if there is a significant disagreement between markers (especially with regard to pass or referral), an independent marker from another Masters programme in the SoFA will review the work presented.

Step 3 Viewing and sampling of examples of work by External Examiners, followed by consideration of marks and where advised, their moderation. This enables us to make sure there is parity and fairness across all programmes of study.

Step 4 Ratification of the marks and recommendation of the result by the Examination Board.

In this way as fine as possible value judgements of a student's performance are established.

Observations

The assessment processes are robust and supportive of students regardless of their specific demography. The formal summative assessment involves at least 3 members of staff from a diverse range of 'critically different' positions as part of the assessment panel. An independent marker may be required if agreement is not reached by the panel and the external examiner oversees the process as a whole. Work presented is considered in relationship to the ILOs and assessment criteria, in relationship to the specific research undertaken and context defined for that practice.

Good Practice:

- Consideration of work submitted for assessment in relationship to the ILOs and assessment criteria, specific research and context;
- Multiple independent marking of work presented for assessment by a highly experienced staff team;
- Collation of individual marks;
- Assessment panel meeting to agree grades and ensure parity;
- Involvement of an independent marker if required;
- External examiner's review of the process.

Professional practice – Potential to promote positive impact

Professional practice is embedded within the MFA programme as one would expect at this level of study. Students are expected to externalise their work in exhibition and related activities where appropriate. Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally at all times.

Notwithstanding this some students have requested that enhancement with regard to professional practice is needed in particular with regard to their post-programme survival.

Good Practice:

- Externalisation of students' work in the public space thus building their exhibition profile;
- Working with others to develop exhibitions and projects e.g. working with MLitt Curatorial Practice students.

Issues:

- Lack of professional practice sessions focused on exhibition practice;
- Lack of professional practice sessions focused on survival strategies e.g. writing proposals and grant applications, constructing project budgets, applying for residencies.

Actions:

- Initiate professional practice sessions focused on exhibition practice;
- Initiate professional practice sessions focused on survival strategies.

Staffing

The programme is taught by the Programme Leader and a diverse core staff team. A central focus will be ensuring that visiting staff represent gender and ethnic diversity, allowing for a range of voices and perspectives to be represented. The employment of visiting tutors will be informed by equality considerations.

4.Actions you have taken or planned as a result of your findings:

Action	Equality Impact	Person responsible	Time frame
All applications to be processed in accordance with GSA policy; Include MLitt staff in interviews where appropriate to avoid interviewing candidates twice;	Advance equality and eliminate discrimination.	MFA Programme Leader	Session 2017-2018
Define and implement at programme/school level a feedback process for applicants that choose not to accept an offer to study at GSA about the reasons for that choice.	Advance equality and eliminate discrimination through improved qualitative data to inform action.	MFA Programme Leader	Applicants to 2018-19 session
Develop and implement systematic feedback mechanism for all applicants about their experience of the application/interview process.	Improve qualitative data and evidence base in order to ensure delivery of PSED in recruitment.	MFA Programme Leader	Applicants to 2018-19 session
In liaison with Registry develop appropriate mechanisms for systematic collection of differentiated data on applications, interviews, offers and acceptances.	Improve evidence base in order to ensure delivery of PSED in admissions.	MFA Programme Leader	Implement 2018-19 application/admissions
Continue to give due consideration to direct progression from UG exploring with the SoFA SMT the professional practice issues that may need to be addressed at UG and the potential to address them.	Eliminate discrimination and advance equality of outcome in relation to age for all protected characteristic groups.	MFA Programme Leader	Session 2017-18 with report to PMAR 2018
Introduce a robust statement on Ethical Good Practice in specifications and documentation.	Foster good relations by supporting dialogue and practice within a framework of shared ethical responsibilities.	MFA Programme Leader	November 2017
Introduce a robust statement on Health & Safety in specifications.	All students aware of the relevance of H&S when working independently and with others.	MFA Programme Leader	November 2017

Initiate professional practice sessions focused on exhibition practice;	Positive impact for all groups with protected characteristics ensuring that all students are aware of the protocols of working in public spaces, working with others and working as part of a team.	MFA Programme Leader	January 2018
Initiate professional practice sessions focused on survival strategies.	Engender an awareness of the legislation covering PC groups in relationship to the development of a professional profile, whilst potentially working with communities as well as different modes of employment (Self and PAYE).	MFA Programme Leader	May 2018
Develop part time route for MFA in line with SoFA PG development strategy.	Advance equality in relation to gender, disability, caring responsibilities and age.	MFA Programme Leader - SMT	June 2019

5. Where/when will progress and the outcomes of your actions be reported and reviewed:

All actions will be included in programme level annual quality enhancement action plan and reported upon through the Programme Monitoring Annual Report (PMAR) process and as part of a Periodic Review with the Programme Team. All quantitative and qualitative data collated over the academic year will be reported and examined in the annual PMAR process.

6. How will your actions and intended outcomes contribute to the delivery of GSA's equality outcomes:

The actions and outcomes of this EIA fully align with and will contribute to GSA's Equality Outcomes 2017-2021 by:

- Ensuring that the programme recruitment model reflects GSA's strategy for Widening Participation (EO: 3)
- Ensure that the programme continues to be responsive to mainstreaming in its design and delivery thus promoting ethical good practice as central to it. (EO: 1 and EO: 2)
- Ensure that the programme continues to promote good practice in Health and Safety thus supporting the needs of all students.(EO:1 and EO:2)
- Engaging all staff and student in curriculum development in terms of scholarly and research activity and the potential for the enhancement of curriculum that further supports a diversity of perspectives thus enabling students to operate within an international context.
- (EO:1 and EO:2)

The outcome of your assessment:

No action (no potential for negative or positive impact)



Action to remove barriers/mitigate negative impact

Action to promote positive impact

X

Sign-off, authorisation and publishing

Review Lead

Name	Henry Rogers
Position	MFA Programme Leader
Signature	
Date	07.11.2017

Executive Lead

Name	Professor Alistair Payne
Position	Head of the School of Fine Art
Signature	
Date	07.11.2017

Equality Lead (Head of Student Support and Development)

Signature	Jill Hammond
Date	7th November 2017