

PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH FOR CREATIVE DISCIPLINES (PS ECD) ONLINE

Summer 2021

Student Guide

What is the GSA Pre-Sessional Course in English for Creative Disciplines Online?

The GSA Pre-Sessional Course in English for Creative Disciplines (PS ECD) constitutes a flexible discipline-specific language and study skills programme tailored to the needs of international students who have been offered a place on an undergraduate or postgraduate course at GSA on the condition that they improve their English up to a level required by the given GSA programme. Achieving the required grades at the end of the PS ECD course allows the students to progress onto their GSA programme without having to retake the IELTS test.

The course is made up of three independent modules, each built around a particular theme:

- Module 1: Objects
- Module 2: Sensory experience mapping
- Module 3: Speculative design - critical approaches to art and design practice

The themes are sufficiently general to allow every student, regardless of their discipline, to engage with it and apply the learning later on their UG or PG course, as evidenced by the feedback from the previous PS ECD students.

Each module lasts 4 weeks and is progressively more challenging than the previous one, both linguistically and conceptually.

Students can join the PS ECD course at any stage, as long as they meet the language requirements of the particular module and complete a preparatory online module (see section 'Practical information about the PS ECD course' below for details).

The course runs fully online, and follows a 'flipped classroom' approach. This means each day start with a 4-5 hour period of self-study during which students are asked to do individual and collaborative tasks. The finishes with a real-time session which lasts around 2 hours.

Why should I take the PS ECD course?

PS ECD offers a unique opportunity to study English and essential academic skills in the context of the creative disciplines (Art, Design and Architecture), their specialist learning methodologies, practices and processes, enriched by discussion of the contemporary art, design and culture in UK, Scotland and worldwide.

Based on close entwining of language with subject content and studio practice, the PS ECD course can help the student to develop discipline-specific practices, which should make the transition to prospective programmes easier.

More specifically, the PS ECD course offers the following advantages:

- integrated individual and group projects combining language and studio practice to allow the development of relevant research skills, creative and critical thinking, content knowledge and professional attributes;
- interactive, inquiry-based and student-centred and -driven teaching methods which mimic those used in the discipline-specific contexts;
- integrated formative assessment to allow the monitoring of progress and establishing of personalised learning objectives through one-to-one and small group tutorials with language and studio tutors;
- a cultural immersion programme in form of virtual gallery visits, film screenings, artist talks, lectures from subject specialists integrated into the course curriculum;
- learning in small groups with guidance from experienced and qualified language and art tutors;
- a suite of learning technologies to facilitate learning and teaching, individual and collaborative work and to help the students develop the necessary digital literacies.

What can I expect to gain from the course?

Overall, the student can expect to improve their performance across the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and subskills in the context of creative disciplines. It is intended that they make a progression within the 'Independent' category of the CEFR framework, from upper B1 to upper B2 (an equivalent of 5.5 – 6.5 range of IELTS), the main features of the transition being increased engagement with language at the level of detail, complexity, familiarity and abstraction of the topic.

More specifically, by completing the PS ECD course, the student can expect to:

- generally, communicate more effectively and confidently in English in the context of critical art and design education, both in writing and speaking;
- improve their listening comprehension when listening to lectures, talks and discussions in the context of the creative disciplines; develop relevant strategies to cope with increasingly more challenging and complex lectures and talks;
- improve their reading comprehension and develop relevant strategies to be better able to cope with a range of disciplinary texts of varying degrees of complexity and length in order to locate significant and relevant information, identify the author's stance and discern between facts and opinions;
- learn how to identify and evaluate pieces of information from a range of spoken and written sources in terms of their relevance to your own spoken and written work;
- develop the necessary note-taking skills while listening and reading in order to use the notes effectively during presentations, seminar discussions and conversations, and in writing;
- develop the necessary skills in relation to referencing and citing in order to appropriately integrate source material in your own work to develop a logical and coherent argument;
- demonstrate a better understanding of the written genres typical of the creative disciplines, such as

- an essay, exhibition review, reflective account, visual analysis, and an ability to produce them;
- develop greater autonomy and independence as a learner in a creative learning environment as well as a range of higher-order thinking skills (e.g. critical and analytical skills, reflection, evaluation) and personal attributes (e.g. cross-cultural communication, creative thinking, collaboration, ethical awareness, adaptability, resourcefulness) in order to succeed at the GSA.

On top of that, the student can expect to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the creative and cultural practices with a specific focus on the context of arts education within Scotland and the UK. This will be mainly achieved through the studio practice integrated into the PS ECD course syllabus.

It is also hoped that the course will help the learners to get familiar with some of the GSA facilities and services such as the Library and the Learning Support as well as the learning technologies used at the School so that the student is able to settle in more quickly when they start their GSA study programme in the academic year 2020/21.

How does the course work?

The overall approach taken to the design of the course relies on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which is learning English by studying a content-based subject, in this case Art, Design and Architecture.

Because of that, the course design features three interconnected subject-specific strands:

- art and design/culture studies concepts, e.g. speculative design;
- art and design methodologies, e.g. visual analysis, reflective journal;
- art and design projects, e.g. sensory mapping project.

The first two strands focus on the presentation and exploration of the topics and relevant illustrative examples of artworks by means of lectures, talks, film screenings, text readings, as well as student- led discussions and presentations. The third 'project' strand is a more practice-oriented component which will ask the students to work individually and/or in small groups to produce a textual/visual/material artefact or a series thereof. This will be subject to formative feedback, including group critiques and critical response process (an artist-driven feedback process during which the author presents their piece together with probing questions for the audience in order to self-evaluate their work). The 'Project' strand will also allow the students to research what an artist's/designer's practice entails, interrogate their own practice, beliefs and values, experiment with research/creation processes as well as collaborate in groups. Last but not least, the projects within this strand feed directly into language outputs – see the section below for details.

All the three strands will strongly rely on inquiry-based learning, which emphasises the need for consistent questioning, problem posing and solving, divergent and convergent thinking, multi- perspective evaluation and group knowledge construction. This particular approach is typical of critical art and design education that the GSA prides itself on.

All the three strands will also integrate an appropriate and relevant language and study skills focus to help the students process the input adequately, develop relevant study and language skills and relevant coping strategies, and produce output demonstrating their ability to use those in context. For example, a lecture may be accompanied by a terminology task and a follow-up discussion.

On top of that, regular language and study skills workshops will be timetabled weekly to analyse the features of the written and spoken texts in more detail and in order to practise a range of language skills and subskills in more controlled activities to help the students make progress in order to achieve the required exit grades.

Throughout the course, regular one-to-one consultations will be offered during which the students will be able to keep track of their development in terms of short- and longer-term goals related to language study and study skills.

A staggered approach to timetabling the language workshops will be taken, with the proportion of the language input being front-loaded and gradually decreasing to make more space for the content input and practice through the project component (with language still being part thereof, in line with CLIL principles). The Project component itself will become progressively more challenging in terms of the complexity of the input and output. In other words, proportionately Module 1 will include more language input than Module 2 or Module 3. For that reason, the language expectations during subsequent modules will be higher. For example, during Module 1, the students will focus on developing writing at the paragraph level while during Module 2 they will be asked to write longer pieces with references to source material. This means a student joining the PS ECD course for Module 2 needs to be able to write well-structured, coherent and developed paragraphs in English.

What could a sample week of study on the PS ECD course look like?

The PS ECD is a full-time course with around 30 hours of study time per week. This includes class contact and self-study. The course is organized this way that most of the self-study has to be completed prior to the live class. The amount of self-study every day may vary between 4 and 5 hours while the live class usually takes around 1.5-2 hours and happens most of the working days. You are also required to remain in regular contact with your peers and the self-study materials will often ask you to work together. Around assessment times, the required number of hours may increase.

Each day starts with self-study materials comprising videos, documents and worksheets, which focus on a particular skills and an aspect of the Module theme and ask the student to work on their own and with a partner to complete the tasks, discuss, prepare short presentations or pieces of writing. This is followed by a real time class with a teacher during which there is time for questions and answers. The idea is that the class is student driven and there is an expectation that the students participate in it actively.

However, each week there are:

- study skills activities in order to develop and practise the academic language skills;
- language activities in order to help to improve accuracy and a range of grammar and vocabulary;
- content input, mostly in form of interactive lectures provided by guest speakers.
- studio input and practice led by experienced art tutors.

How do I get assessed?

The students will only be assessed on the development of their language and study skills. While the studio component is not assessed, it gives the basis for the linguistic/academic assessment and indirectly feeds into it. In other words, all the assessed written and spoken language outputs rely on the studio projects.

The table below demonstrates how the studio and language components are linked in terms of assessment:

	STUDIO PROJECT	ASSESSED LANGUAGE COMPONENT	
		Written output	Spoken output
Module 1 - OBJECTS	A material response to an object from GSA Archives. Students work in pairs. All the objects are then curated as a group exhibition which is publicly available online.	Exhibition materials in form of labels and description for each object (pair-work), group exhibition catalogue for the guests to take away (groupwork). An individual visual and contextual analysis of the two objects.	Individual presentations of the exhibition objects ('artist talk') plus a group critique. An individual reflection on the project via video.
Module 2 – SENSORY EXPERIENCE MAPPING	Designing a sensory experience around a home environment. Students work in small groups. Each 'experience' is tested by another group. There is a possibility of external guests trying out the 'experiences' too.	A supporting statement for the experience design explaining the rationale and the design process – written in groups. A reflective account – written individually.	Group presentations discussing the design process, including the peer feedback from the 'experience' testers plus a group critique. An individual reflection on the project via video.
Module 3 – CRITICAL ART AND DESIGN	Designing a product or service following the principles of speculative design. Students work in small groups.	An individually written essay providing a theoretical discussion and analysis of the themes resulting from the Project.	Individual presentations of the Projects plus a group critique. A seminar discussion on the value of speculative design principles for different creative disciplines. An individual reflection on the project via video.

The first two modules will rely on formative/continuous assessment ('coursework' and 'class engagement') via individual and collaborative tasks and participation in the live classes. The student is expected to maintain a language portfolio to document their learning journey and through which formative feedback will be provided. There will be 'summative' tasks for each skill toward the end of each module. The tasks will usually take form of integrated assessment tasks, for instance:

- 'listen to speak/write' task;
- 'read to speak/write' task;
- two interconnected speaking tasks, e.g. presentation/seminar discussion, to demonstrate the student's ability to respond to feedback;
- two interconnected writing tasks, e.g. single artwork visual analysis and a compare-and-contrast analysis of two artworks, to demonstrate the student's ability to respond to feedback.

The tasks are referred to as 'summative' because even though there will be an expectation of progress over the duration of the block, not reaching the expected module exit grades will not prevent the student from progressing to the next stage of the course. For this reason, at the end of the first and second module, the student will receive a progress report stating what stage they are at in a descriptive way: 'well on track', 'making progress', 'needs to work'.

The last third module will follow a similar arrangement, i.e. there will be formative and summative tasks as above; however, this time the students will receive grades (equivalents of the IELTS scores). Each of the language skills will be given equal weighting of 25%.

To help the students develop their portfolio of coursework, formative feedback events will be held regularly throughout the course, including group critiques and self-evaluations structured around the idea of the critical response process, as well as individual consultations with the tutor.

Practical information about the PS ECD course

In order to apply for the PS ECD for Creative Disciplines, the students have to have a conditional offer for any GSA course which requires them to improve their language skills up to a level required by the prospective course. These requirements will be different for undergraduate and postgraduate courses and so they affect the entry requirements for the PS ECD Course. Check your programme website for details.

Depending on their current IELTS results, the students can join the PS ECD course at three intake points to undertake all three modules (12 weeks), Modules 2 and 3 (8 weeks), or only the last third Module (4 weeks).

The table overleaf outlines the entry requirements for the GSA Programmes and the PS ECD course modules, as well as the module start dates and associated fees.

Main course English language requirement	Pre-Sessional English course language requirement*	Course we recommend	Induction week	Course start date	Course end date	Tuition fees**
IELTS 6.5 overall with no individual skill lower than 6.0	At least 6.0 overall None of the individual skills lower than 5.5	12-week course (Module 1, 2, 3)	1st – 4th June	7th June	27th August	£4,150
	At least 6.0 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.5 All other skills must be 6.0 or higher	8-week course (Module 2, 3)	29th June – 2nd July	5th July		£2,950
	At least 6.5 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.5 All other skills must be 6.0 or higher	4-week course (Module 3)	27th – 30th July	2nd August		£1,550
IELTS 6.0 overall with no individual skill lower than 5.5	At least 5.5 overall None of the individual skills lower than 5.0	12-week course (Module 1, 2, 3)	1st – 4th June	7th June	27th August	£4,150
	At least 5.5 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.0 All other skills must be 5.5 or higher	8-week course (Module 2, 3)	29th June – 2nd July	5th July		£2,950
	At least 6.0 overall Maximum of one skill at 5.0 All other skills must be 5.5 or higher	4-week course (Module 3)	27th – 30th July	2nd August		£1,550

* Please note the PSE course requirements indicate the minimum entry levels. If your level is higher, you can still join the PSE course at an earlier stage if you feel it can benefit you.

* If your scores are borderline, it is better to err on the side of caution – the course is intensive and demanding and is probably completely different from English courses you have taken so far; additionally, online learning takes time to get used to, so it may be better to give yourself some extra time.

* If you have a jagged profile, that is one with big discrepancies between individual scores, it is worth thinking carefully which course is the best fit. The best is to consult the Pre-Sessional team to get personalised advice.

* We also accept the English language qualifications listed here:

<https://www.gsa.ac.uk/media/1798763/english-language-qualifications-student-visa-jan21.pdf>

It may be challenging to convert the scores. We recommend you contact the Pre-sessional team, if you are in doubt.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Any enquiries can be made to pre-sessional@gsa.ac.uk