



THE UNIVERSITY
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MA Design for Change

School of Design
Edinburgh College of Art

Dr. Rachel Harkness, Programme Director – November 2024

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What We Will Cover Today:

- University of Edinburgh and ECA Context
- Design for Change MA Programme Overview (Introductions to the Teaching Team; Real World Challenges; Programme Ethos; How We Teach-Learn)
- Programme Structure (Structure; Electives; Student Work Examples; MA Show)
- Employability/What Do Our Graduates Do?
- How to Apply (inc. What We Look for in Applicants and Applications; Scholarships; Additional Links)
- Questions and Answers



Context: Join us at the heart of the city of Edinburgh!



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Context: The University of Edinburgh



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Investing in our facilities

Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) is excited to be undertaking a redevelopment of ECA's Lauriston Campus over the next few years (until April 2027).

The project aims to maximise the use of existing space, improve accessibility, and create a vibrant campus that fosters collaboration and innovation.

The project involves refurbishing and repurposing various spaces across the Lauriston campus, including technical facilities and teaching spaces. New social spaces, seminar rooms, and studios are being created to accommodate our growing community. You can find more about the project at the below link:

[Building work starts at ECA's Lauriston Campus | Edinburgh College of Art](#)



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Context: Edinburgh College of Art



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Programme Overview

What makes Design for Change distinctive?

- Situated in the surrounding place and culture of the city of Edinburgh and the country of Scotland.
- Situated within UoE, with links to allied disciplines including Anthropology; Geography; Business; Philosophy; Engineering; etc.
- Non-discipline specific; but rooted in the methods and praxis of design, social design, design anthropology and design culture studies.
- Integrated within a Design School with 13 distinct programmes (from Animation to Textiles, Film Directing to Design Informatics)
- Access to multiple workshops for creation and production of work in a variety of media.
- Intensive engagement in a studio-based environment alongside emphasis on social methods such as the creative ethnographic and the participatory.
- A tight international and interdisciplinary cohort dedicated to making change and bringing all sorts of skills to the table (c.40 students per year).
- Working on real-world challenges – “wicked problems”.
- Growing alumni network of global change-makers.



Programme Overview: Introductions

Dr. Rachel Harkness

Lecturer in Design Ecologies; School of Design
Programme Director, Design for Change (MA) and
Course Organiser



Prof. Craig Martin

Professor; School of Design
Course Organiser



Dr. Arno Verhoeven

Senior Lecturer; School of Design
Course Organiser



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Programme Overview: Introductions cont.

Emily Ford-Halliday

Lecturer in Fashion; School of Design
Course Organiser and Tutor



Dr. Giovanni Marmont

Lecturer in Social Design; School of Design
Course Organiser and Tutor



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Overview: Real World Challenges



Overview: Real World Challenges

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- Growing research capability to meet the challenges faced by developing countries
- GCRF Global Engagement Events
- GCRF Strategic Advisory Group
- GCRF Strategy and Challenge Areas
- Interdisciplinary Research Hubs to Address Intractable Challenges
- GCRF Awarded Projects

Global Challenges Research Fund

Home > RCUK Funding > Global Challenges Research Fund

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a 5-year £1.5Bn fund and a key component in the delivery of the UK Aid Strategy: tackling global challenges in the national interest. The fund aims to ensure that UK research takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries through:

- challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries
- providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

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Funding opportunity

Design Exchange Partnerships: design the green transition

FUTURE OBSERVATORY

A national programme for design research supporting the UK's response to the climate crisis.

Latest:
Now hiring: Managing Editor
Future Observatory is launching a journal [read more](#)

Sign up to the Future Observatory newsletter [This is a low-carbon website, learn more here](#)

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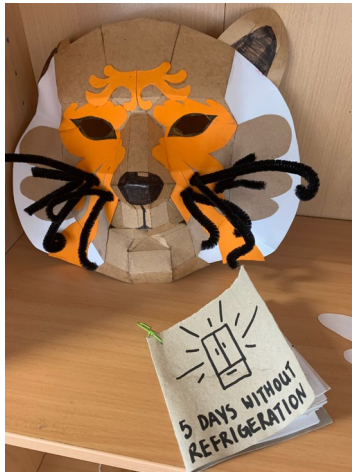
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Overview: Programme Ethos



- Addressing “wicked problems” that individuals, groups and communities face (and thereby challenging the idea of neat ‘solutions’ somewhat).
- Proposing change through interdisciplinary and creative designs, considering new collaborations, relations, scenarios and transitions.
- Taking a critical approach to the idea of ‘change’ itself.
- Equipping ourselves with the tools and methods for building new, sustainable, more equitable futures.
- Encouraging student involvement, non-hierarchy and a respectful and inclusive studio culture

Overview: How We Teach-Learn?



- Studio-driven
- Creatively
- Workshop-based
- Project-led
- Theoretically-informed
- Experientially



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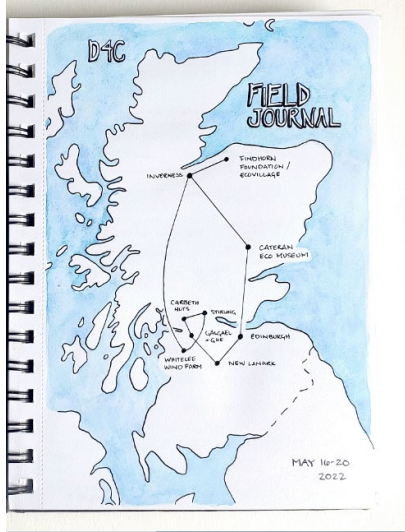
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Overview: How We Teach-Learn?



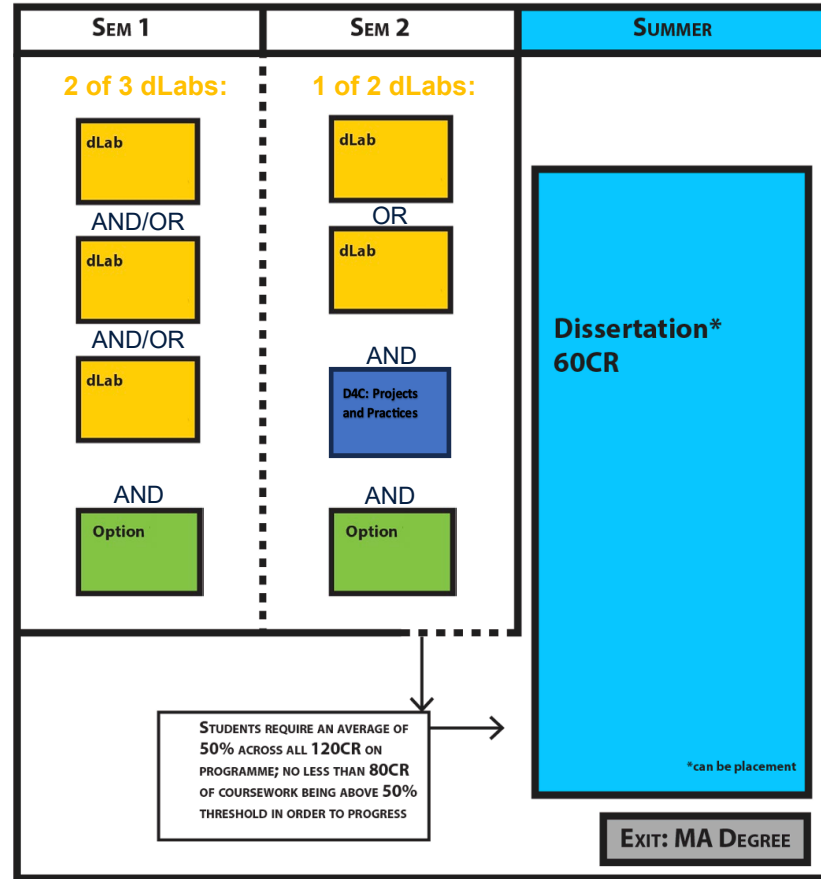
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Programme Structure:



5 Design Labs (dLabs) from which you do three.
You choose:

2 from

- Social Change
- Environmental Change
- Inclusive Change

1 from

- Technical Change
- Political Change

2 options (called **Electives**) from across Design/ECA and allied disciplines based across University of Edinburgh

A dedicated course on creative methods (called **Designing for Change: Projects and Practices**) to lead into...

Supervised **Dissertation** course which is an independent project that is accompanied by a written text and usually also an MA Show exhibition contribution.



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Programme Structure: Examples of Elective Options in the Curriculum

Semester 1

- Understanding Technology
- Anthropology and Environment
- Design, Play and Games
- People First: International Development
- Interactive Visual Design
- Environmental Design: Materials, Ecologies, Futures

... and more

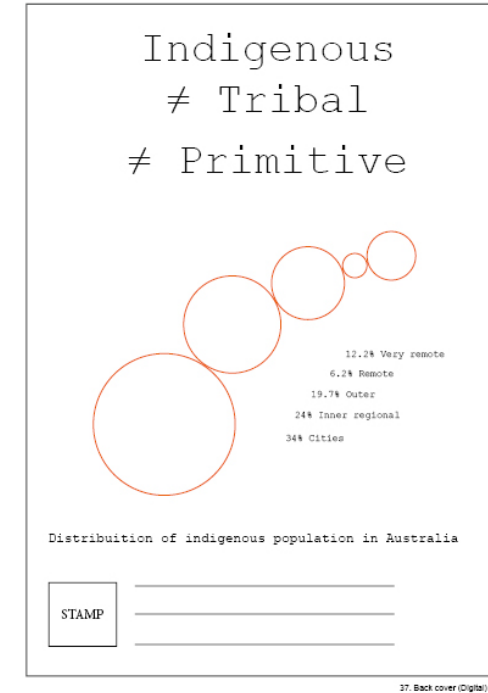
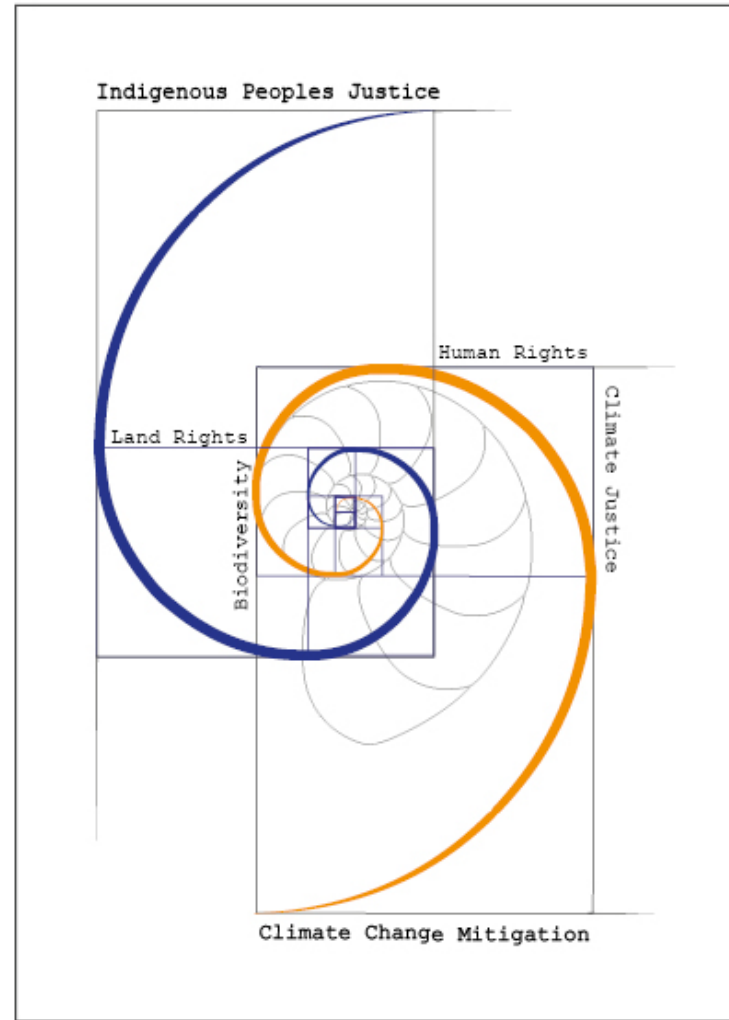
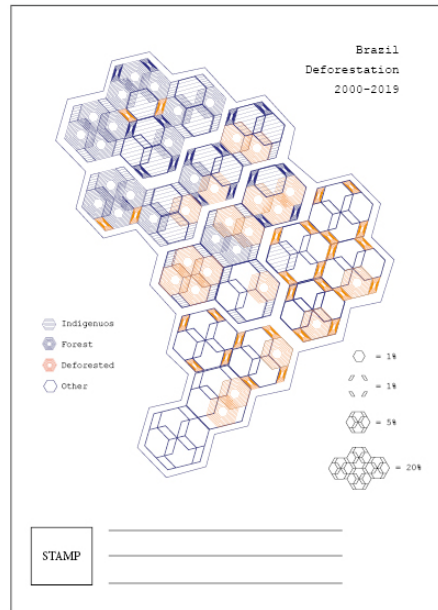
Semester 2

- Disseminating Design Practices
- Everyday Cultures
- Technology Commercialisation and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- Design Thinking
- Health, Nature and Greenspace

... and more



Programme Structure: Student Projects: Dissertation



Irene Delfanti

- D4C [20/21]
- Unlearning Western Practices, a case for Design and Biodiversity

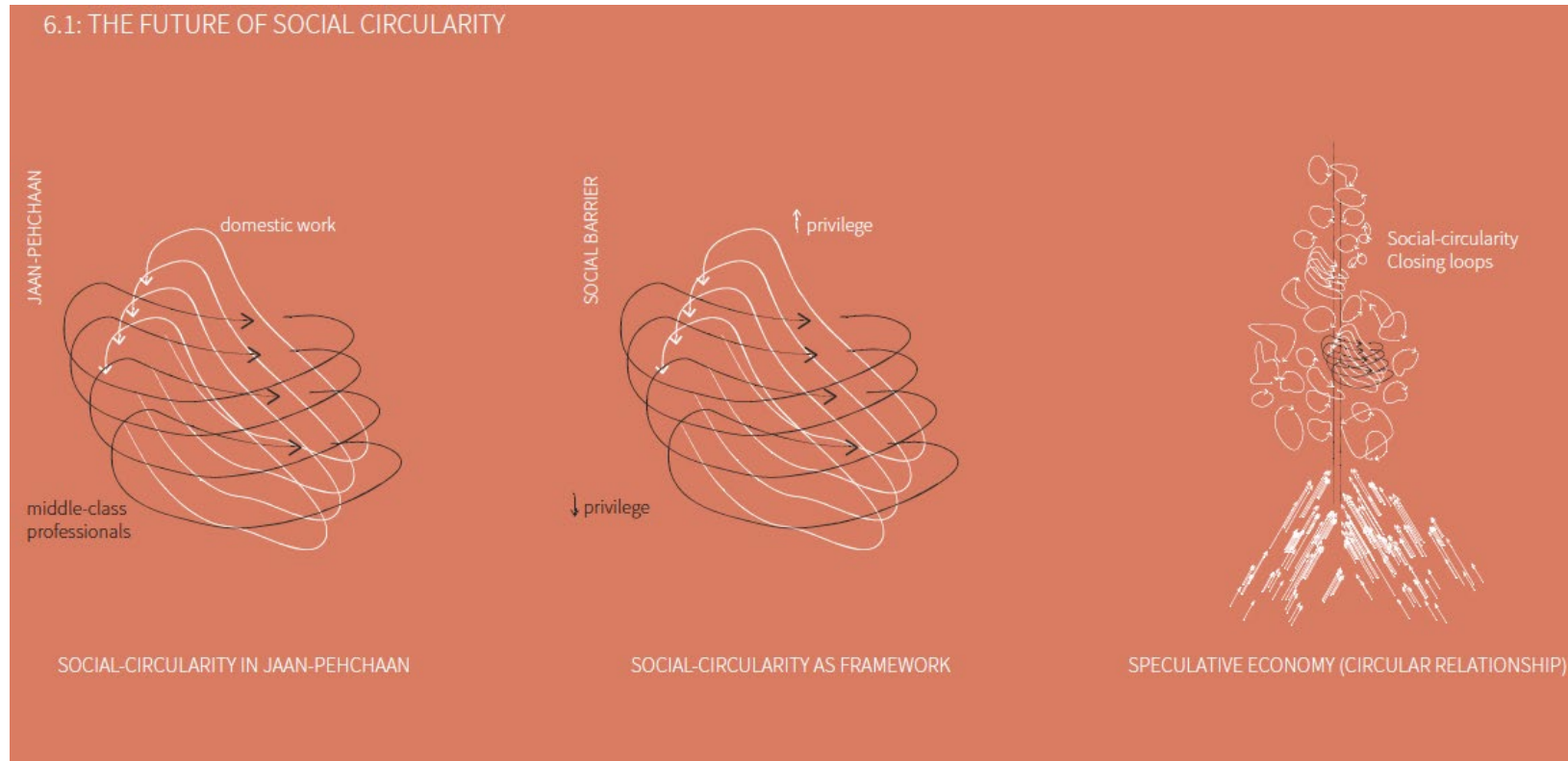
Programme Structure: Student Projects: Dissertation



Diana Carolina Garduño Jiménez

- D4C [18/19]
- Re-designing our Food Systems: A Decolonial Workshop Toolkit

Programme Structure: Student Projects: Dissertation



Farzan Dalal

- D4C [19/20]
- Jaan-Pehchaan: Service design project on social inclusion of internal migrant workers in India through increasing social relationships and connections.

Programme Structure: Student Projects: Dissertation



Juliet Seger

- D4C [19/20]
- "The Human Touch" – design-led exploration of labour, technology and gender in clothing manufacture.



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Programme Structure: MA Show



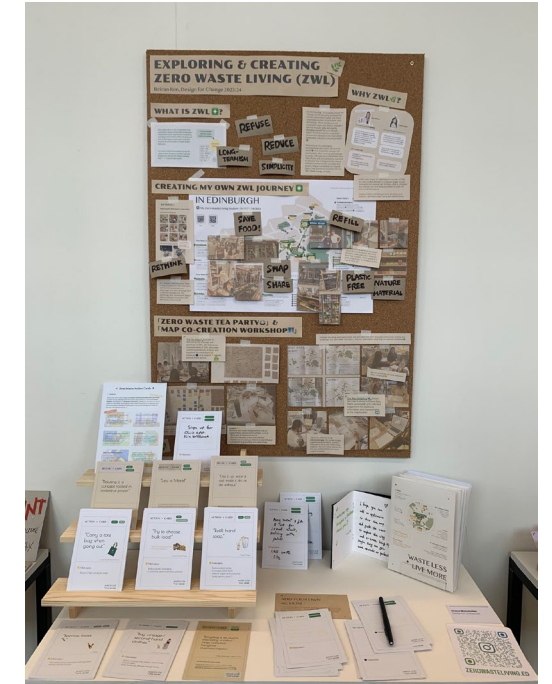
- D4C MA Show [21/22]
- Students had digital posters and a video about their work available to view on the screen(s) and displayed select artefacts and documents in the cases and on the walls



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Programme Structure: MA Show



- D4C MA Show [23/24]
- Students had digital posters and a video about their work available to view on the screen(s). They also displayed process boards (literally showing their process) on the walls and select artefacts and documents on the plinths

Employability



Key focus on transferrable skills offered by multi-disciplinary approach to design

- Communication skills
- Collaboration
- Working with people and in people-centred ways
- Design praxis
- Critical thinking
- Systems thinking
- Experimental and art-based methodologies
- Design thinking
- Intersection of grassroots and policy-based approaches
- Timely, real-world projects
- Work-based placement dissertation option
- Research skills

Employability: Examples of Student Destinations



- Project Officer at Nourish, Scotland
- Designer/Co-founder at Future Practical Studio
- Project Analyst at Innocent Drinks
- UX Designer at FATHOM_/Shaping Places
- Design Researcher at Community Land Scotland
- Service Designer at Department of Justice (GOV UK)
- Design Researcher at Cloudforest, Environmental Services
- Self-directed start-ups with seed funding from University of Edinburgh (based on dissertation projects)
- Research Assistants
- Tutors and Lecturers
- PhD Studies

How to Apply

Visit the Degree Finder and search for Design for Change MA (eca):

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees/>

In your application, please include:

- A **Personal Statement**. Tell us about yourself and about why you want to study Design for Change!
- A **Portfolio**. Evidence of your ability to communicate in non-textual forms as well as your motivation to engage in creative design-led practices which embrace a wide variety of media, materials and techniques. (NB. The important formatting requirements.)
 - Include **a link to a 2-minute video** outlining an issue-based challenge you might like to address through design-led change – show us how and why?
 - Include **a collection of visual support material which demonstrates your affinity and aptitude for engaging in creative, design-led work.**



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How to Apply: What We Look for in Applicants



Somebody that possesses:

- A good first degree in a relevant discipline (not necessarily design);
- An affinity with designerly and creative practices;
- A desire to challenge prevailing ideas of what we mean by 'design' and an openness to learn;
- A belief in the potential of design (and design research) to help implement and influence change;
- Advanced English language skills – very important;
- Curiosity and criticality.



How to Apply: What We Look For in Applications

“What makes for a good application?” “What are you looking for in an application?”

These are common questions – and they often seem to indicate that applicants believe we are looking for things and objects in portfolios; when in fact **we are most interested in process and approaches.**

What does this mean?

Our criteria for evaluating applications are the extent to which we can see evidence of :

- Understanding of the Programme’s context and values (e.g. that we are interdisciplinary or even non-disciplinary and attentive to issues of justice);
- Designerly, creative and imaginative competencies and affinities (bearing in mind that we encourage applicants that come from varied backgrounds);
- Abilities to research (through design and fieldwork, but also through literature and other academic resources), analyse your findings and synthesise and communicate them convincingly.
- Thoughtful evaluation and reflection of own process and progress as well as wider issues and movements for/of change.

Ultimately we are also looking for uniqueness, in the sense that we are looking to see **you** in your application and for this to bring distinctness to your portfolio elements and personal statement.



How to Apply: What We Look For in Applications cont.



In summary, does your whole portfolio show us evidence of:

- working like a designer and/or creative, with an aesthetic and material sensibility;
- analytical thinking skills about contemporary issues relevant to the programme;
- skills in synthesizing of ideas into opportunities to communicate change;
- skills in evaluating your own work and using designerly judgment in progressing your projects;
- strong contextual awareness of the role that design (along with other disciplines) can, or cannot play, in developing and delivering appropriate change...or at the very least a keen desire to explore this.

We particularly value original, personally-specific and non-formulaic applications.



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How to Apply: Scholarships / Financial Support

See the University's funding information for postgraduates here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate>

Funding for UK students, including Scottish-domiciled student loans – info here

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/uk-eu>

Scholarship Schemes within ECA:

- Andrew Grant Scholarships, £10,500 each <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/international/humanities/edinburgh-college-of-art/andrew-grant>
- John L Paterson Scholarship £8000 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/uk-eu/humanities/edinburgh-college-of-art/john-l-paterson>
- EU Scholarships Scheme <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/postgraduate/international/humanities/edinburgh-college-of-art/eca-eu-scholarships-scheme>

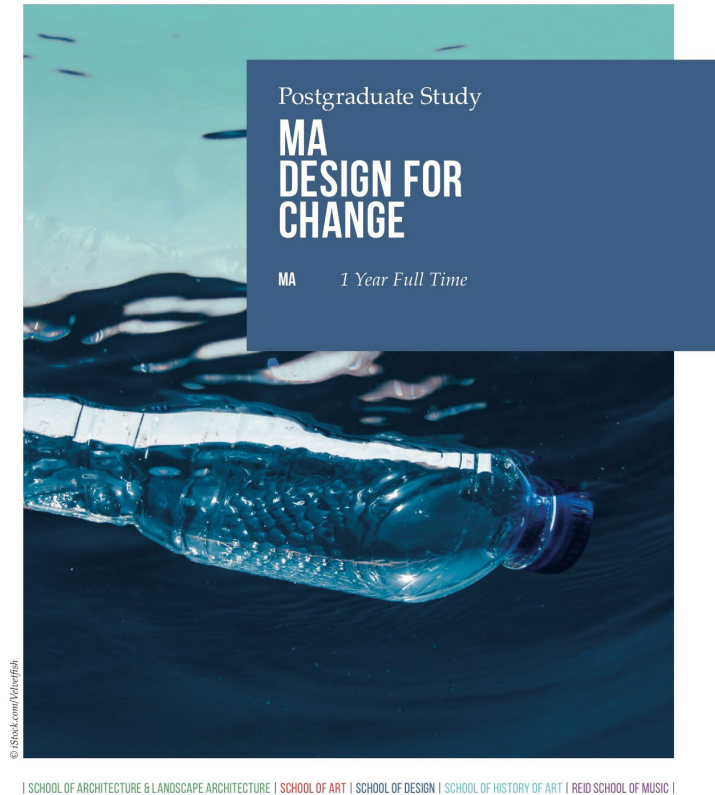




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www.eca.ed.ac.uk



Additional Links:

Follow Design for Change MA on Instagram @d4c_ed

Our **official programme page**, including some of our alumni profiles here:

<https://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/design-change-ma>

See our old **student-created website** from some years ago (created during the pandemic when no MA Show was possible) for insight into student work and alumni networks:

<http://www.designforchange.eca.ed.ac.uk/>



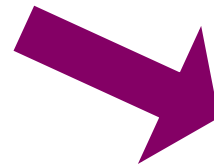
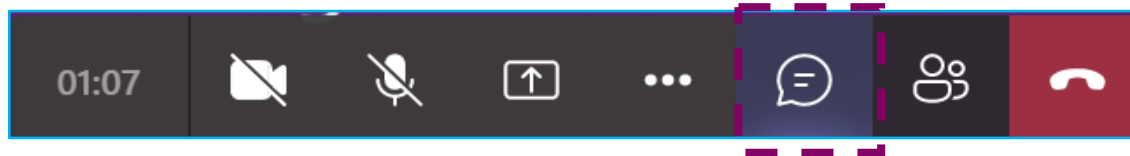
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Questions?

Asking questions (Microsoft Teams):

- No question is a silly question.
- Please type your question into the Chat Area



Next steps...

<https://virtualvisits.ed.ac.uk/pg>



<https://edin.ac/student-chat-pg>



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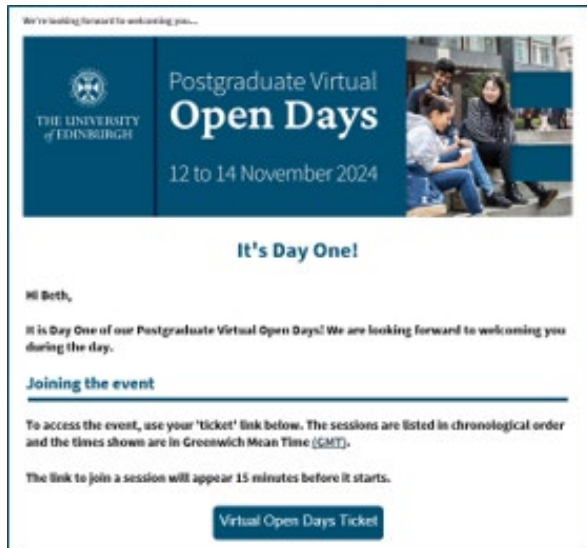
Contact details for follow-up questions

- We apologise if we did not get through all of your questions in the time allotted for this session. If you have further questions that have not been answered, please email: futurestudents@ed.ac.uk
- The address above should be emailed for help with the application systems, technology and any questions to do with the process of applying and your specific application once in-progress.
- If you have a specific Programme-related query, which is not to do with any of the above, then you can get in touch with the Programme Director, Dr. Rachel Harkness on r.j.harkness@ed.ac.uk

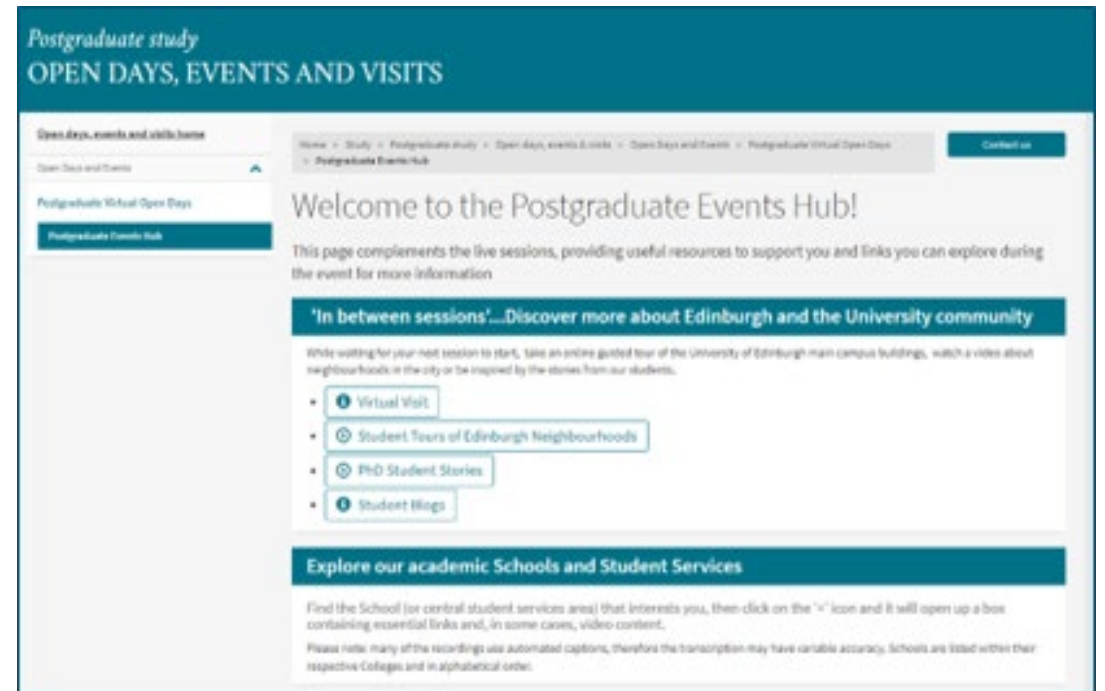


Thank you – click ‘Leave’ when the session ends

- Return to your ‘e-ticket’ to find and attend other sessions you’ve booked – by clicking on the button in the email we sent you...



- ...and visit the events hub:
- <https://edin.ac/4gZuP3G>





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Thank you

Dr. Rachel Harkness

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