

Mackintosh Building Fire, Glasgow School of Art

23rd May 2014

This short report describes the actions taken by The Glasgow School of Art as a result of a major fire incident in the Mackintosh Building within the School's Garnethill campus on Friday 23rd May 2014.

The primary focus of the report is on the Incident Management procedures that GSA has followed since 23rd May. The School reopened for academic activity on 30th May 2014. Assessment of all student activity was completed during week beginning 2nd June. The GSA Degree show for Design and Architecture Students opened on schedule on 12th June, alongside a specially curated exhibition of digital prints from each of the 102 Final Year Fine Art students affected by the fire.

At 12:30 on 23rd May, a fire was discovered by a member of staff in a basement studio on the East side of the Mackintosh building. The fire alarm was raised, emergency services were alerted and arrived on scene within 4 minutes at 12:34. GSA staff and students evacuated the Mackintosh Building.

The Emergency services took control of the site and set up exclusion zones to protect both the property and minimise risk to human safety.

At approximately 12:50 after a roll-call was taken at the GSA fire assembly point, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services were informed that all persons had been evacuated safely.

Senior managers from the Glasgow School of Art initiated the School's 'Disaster Recovery Plan' and immediately provided GSA officers to cooperate with the Emergency services. At 13:00 GSA set up an Incident Management Control Room in its Rose Street premises which was outside the exclusion zone.

The Incident Management call tree was initiated and all relevant Management and staff were contacted to inform them of the incident and to request that they attend the Incident Management Control Room to receive updates to the incident and to activate their respective roles and responsibilities in dealing with the events that were unfolding.

GSA's initial responsibilities were to ensure that its staff and students were safe and provided with appropriate support services to assist them as developments unfolded. Our counselling services staff were on site immediately to provide this support.

After the first 24 hours, GSA had formed a clear picture of what it had to do in order to provide its students and staff with the support and relocation needed to support getting the School back up and running during a key point in the Academic Year and to ensure safe and secure retrieval of archives, personal effects, student work, recoverable items of historic interest and professional support services from the Mackintosh Building. A series of Incident Management workstreams were initiated.

An Emergency Meeting of the GSA Board of Governors was convened on Tuesday 27th May.

The Critical Incident Management team continued meeting on a daily basis until Wednesday 4th June when they handed over management of the incident to the GSA Executive Group. This group is now handling the matter as an issue of Business Continuity. There are many aspects to business continuity including:

- Arranging decant into appropriate accommodation of staff and students who were and would be resident in the Mackintosh Building
- Ensuring continuity of academic activity previously located in the Mackintosh Building
- Negotiating insurance claims, covering: Building, Historical Contents and Business Interruption.
- Restoration of Archives and Collections.
- Restoration of damaged student work.
- Relationships with external agencies: GCC, Historic Scotland, Architects and Contractors, Scottish and UK government, SFC, other HEIs
- Relationships with general public and wider GSA community
- Impact on GSA enterprises and exhibitions
- The Phoenix Residency Scheme
- The academic process of assessment, appeals and graduation for affected students
- Ongoing media management and communications
- Organising short term, medium and long term restoration of the Mackintosh Building
- Counseling of staff and students affected by the events and subsequent disruption
- Fundraising and handling offers of help arising from the fire
- Health & Safety reporting on the fire itself
- Avoiding adverse impact on GSA recruitment

There were many dimensions to the way the Critical Incident Management Team handled events, decisions and actions between 23rd May and 4th June. In July GSA will formally review this to reflect on how the incident was handled to establish:

- a] What lessons GSA can learn from the incident and how it was handled?
- b] What the HE sector might learn from the incident and how it was handled?

This will be reported to the GSA Board of Governors in September 2014 and may in due course be circulated more widely.

Professor Tom Inns
Director
Glasgow School of Art
Friday 13th June