



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Architecture
Award:	Masters
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Architecture
Campus location(s):	Kensington
Total UK credits:	240
Partner(s) (if applicable):	ARB/RIBA Part II (validated)
Type of partnership (if applicable):	The Architecture programme is a professionally accredited degree, as awarded by ARB and RIBA.
ARB/RIBA valid from/to:	2021-26
RCA validation from/to:	2025-26

2. Programme Philosophy

It is a time of utmost fragility. The previous paradigms of architectural pedagogy and practice need revising in the face of current challenges. These paradigms must be questioned and tested to find new, agile forms of collaboration, and practice at the intersection of environment, technology, politics, and culture. The role and responsibility of the architect and architecture need to be repositioned relative to the contemporary world.

The MA Architecture Programme (ARB/RIBA Part II) at the Royal College of Art is a research-driven, studio based post-graduate education that critically tests the making of architecture and spatial practice. The programme supports the development of each students' personal position and practice relative within the field. The programme fosters an inclusive, critical and responsive, context in which architecture is explored as a medium, rather than a goal in itself. We are attentive to urgent political, social, and ecological questions, which allows us to interrogate the contexts and processes of architectural production and support our students to redefine practice.

The MA Architecture programme is engaged with the conditions and intergenerational concerns that define our era - the global imbalances and inequalities forged in the age of empire, and the environmental collapse we all bear testimony to. The programme asks students to engage with these fluctuating social, political, technical, and cultural contexts, to identify their ethical responsibility as a future architect and their contribution within these larger existential debates. Students will expand on the role of the architect, modes of representation, and definitions of practice in order to imagine new worlds, to challenge modes of existence and to imagine different forms of life and ecology and reassess the value of material and buildings.

The MA Architecture programme is delivered over two years. The Architectural Design Studios (ADS) serve as the core of all teaching and learning, running as a spine throughout the two years, with complementary studies sitting alongside, infusing technical, historical, theoretical, professional and ethical knowledge. This enables students to continually relate their learning back

to design projects and their own studio practice. The architecture programme staff consists of architects, academics, historians, engineers, and artists. It is a distinct group with diverse practices that are internationally recognised. The studio tutors bring original perspectives on architecture and expose students to new forms of knowledge in the field, encouraging engagements with industry partners and external institutions.

The programme is conceived as a platform to discuss contemporary issues around the making, materialising, mediating, and consumption of architecture. It is a scaffold to consider the real-world dynamics of architecture. Learning is supported through individual and group tutorials, lectures, seminars, workshops, crits, reviews, and presentations. While there is a rich breadth of teaching and regular contact with staff and invited guests, we believe it is through the student's own reflective research practice that our students learn the most. The MA Architecture programme is designed to fully support and guide students along their journey. We will support students to challenge preconceived notions of architecture and hope they are transformed by their experience within the programme.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

Developing design responses to questions that emerge out of research which test the instrumentality of architecture in the world is at the core of the programme.

Educational criteria, research and staff development cross-fertilise, mirroring an important RCA value to bringing innovation and industry together. Within this context, MA Architecture seeks to promote the highest possible standards in education and contribute to the culture of the respective professions in a lasting and innovative way.

- You are encouraged to test the limits of architectural practice and become a leading professional architecture degree worldwide;
- You will be supported to contribute to the re-invention of contemporary knowledge, research and practice of architecture and related fields;
- The programme provides a rich and unique social and working environment that helps you to develop and demonstrate research, technical and design skills while allowing you to advance your professional and academic abilities;
- The programme provides you with critical skills that will allow you to position your own independent research in design practice within the field and to evaluate and critically absorb current architectural knowledge, scholarship, theoretical and practice-based research;
- The programme exposes you to an interdisciplinary ethos that proposes a unique and original way to conduct practice-based, design-led research, supporting you in developing their individual skills whilst also learning to work with others in an interdisciplinary and collaborative environment;
- You are supported in design-led experimentation and research that understands the relation between theory and practice of architecture;
- The programme ensures that you are prepared technically for professional life, and delivers the RIBA/ARB Part II validated degree by covering all of the relevant criteria and graduate attributes towards professional accreditation;
- You are encouraged to test the broader cultural contexts of the discipline and to experiment and test the boundaries of architectural practice freely.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

The programme learning outcomes refer directly to the *ARB/RIBA General Criteria Part 1 & Part 2* and the *Graduate Attributes for Part 2*. For more information and detailed information on the criteria, including sub-criteria, and attributes please refer to ARB Criteria at Part 2:

https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ARB_Criteria_pt2.pdf

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	GC2 adequate knowledge of the histories and theories of architecture and the related arts, technologies and human sciences.
A2.	GC6 understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, in particular in preparing briefs that take account of social factors.
A3.	GC3 knowledge of the fine arts as in influence on the quality of architectural design.
A4.	GA2.4 critical understanding of how knowledge is advanced through research to produce clear, logically argued and original written work relating to architectural culture, theory and design.

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	GC1 ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements
B2.	GA2.1 ability to generate complex design proposals showing understanding of current architectural issues, originality in the application of subject knowledge and, where appropriate, to test new hypotheses and speculations

B3.	GC7 understanding of the methods of investigation and preparation of a design brief for a design project
B4.	GA2.2 ability to evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals
B5.	GC8 understanding of the structural design, construction and engineering problems associated with building designs
B6.	GA2.3 ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals
B7.	GC9 adequate knowledge of the physical problems and technologies and function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate
B8.	GC4 adequate knowledge of urban design, planning and the skills involved in the planning process
B9.	GC11 adequate knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall planning

Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	GC10 the necessary design skills to meet building users' requirements within the constraints imposed by cost factors and building regulations
C2.	GC5 understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings and spaces between them to human needs and scale
C3.	GA2.5 understanding of the context of the architect and the construction industry, including the architect's role in the processes of procurement and building production, and under legislation
C4.	GA2.6 problem solving skills, professional judgement, and ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances
C5.	GA2.7 ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

YR1	T1	T2	T3
	MEDIA STUDIES I (15CP)		
	STUDIO I (15 CP)	STUDIO II (15 CP)	STUDIO III (15 CP)
		TECHNICAL STUDIES I (15 CP)	TECHNICAL STUDIES II (15 CP)
	COLLEGE WIDE UNIT (30CP = T1 15CP / T2 15CP)		

YR2	T4	T5	T6
	PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (15CP)		
	HISTORY THEORY STUDIES I (15CP)	SCHOOL WIDE OFFER: ELECTIVE (15CP)	
	DESIGN STRATEGY (15CP)	STUDIO IV, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT (60CP)	

Programme Structure

Year One

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Studio I	1	15	CORE
Studio II	2	15	CORE
Studio III	3	15	CORE
Media Studies I	1	15	CORE
Technical Studies I	2	15	CORE
Technical Studies II	3	15	CORE
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)	1&2	30	CORE

Year Two

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Design Strategy	4	15	CORE
Professional Practice Studies I	4	15	CORE
History & Theory Studies I	4	15	CORE
History & Theory Studies II (School-wide unit)	5	15	ELECTIVE
Media Studies II (School-wide unit)	5	15	ELECTIVE
Studio IV, IRP	5&6	60	CORE

Please note, there are **Independent Study** weeks included in your programme (one per term). During these weeks there will be no scheduled teaching or assessment, and limited access to Technical Services. Self-service will be available for inducted users, and you may independently use computing and technology zones, bench spaces, and the resources store and art shop. These weeks are intended for you to work independently, and technical supervision, fabrication support, or supervision of high-risk activities will not be available.

Independent Research Project

In the Independent Research Project (IRP) students will independently develop a design response to the research question that is identified in the Design Strategy unit.

The IRP project builds on your skills, knowledge and experience developed over the course

of the programme to develop a mature and sophisticated design project that clearly identifies your personal practice within the field.

Successful projects will develop a spatial proposition in response to a clear research question that is identified by you and developed and tested against a context and set of parameters, which are also identified by you.

Projects are to be presented and represented in the most effective means to communicate project intent and agency within the field, capitalising on the diverse resources of the College.

The Architectural Design Studio (ADS) themes serve as a contextual backdrop and provocation for you as you develop your own IRP. These themes assist you in identifying your own interests and defining your practice. The ADS themes are designed to work alongside and feed into the key research agendas of the School. While ADS themes and briefs change each year, they work within a common framework. The ADS structure provides the you with the tools and methodology to conduct post-graduate research within which you identify a research question and translate this into a design response.

5. How will I learn?

Architecture Design Studios

The core of the learning process lies in project-based activity that is taught in the first- and second-year design studio courses. This is conducted through a vertically integrated unit system of ADS with diverse and innovative positions on contemporary architectural practice that serves to constantly inspire, challenge, motivate and support the individual approach of each student.

Each ADS has 2-3 dedicated tutors, a unique outlook on architecture, thematic interests and corresponding skill sets that establishes a pedagogical framework that is articulated through the ADS brief. In their respective ways, each challenges the role of the architect and how architectural design can embody this response in an experimental and practical way. The interests of the respective studios span major theoretical and practice-based aspects of architecture today.

Important to the ADS structure is peer learning with first- and second-year students working alongside one another. The community of students in each ADS is itself an essential structure of the learning environment. The student desks and working space is arranged loosely according to ADS to foster collective work and engagement.

Tutorials

You are guided through your project work through individual and group tutorials. You will typically have an average of one tutorial per week with your ADS tutors. This is in combination with individual and group tutorials for the other units of study. Tutorials are an informal opportunity to discuss the progress of your work with a tutor and provide regular feedback. Tutorials are taught in blended mode with in-person teaching and some tutorials online, as required.

Workshops

Workshops provide specific technical skills and training or development of the design project with invited guests. Specific to the workshop format is the production and output of work during the event.

Seminars

Seminars are presentations and discussions around a specific theme hosted by students or staff and supported by specific readings.

Lectures

The programme runs lectures for a number of units of studies: Media Studies, Technical Studies 1&2, Design Strategy, History and Theory Studies and Professional Practice Studies. These are complimented by the School's international lecture series. These lectures are delivered in blended mode of teaching with some lectures delivered online.

Reviews

A review, pinup or 'crit' requires a formal presentation of your work for feedback from a panel of critics that may include invited guests. Fellow tutors, students and guests may attend and engage in the review. Different from an exam, this format is a session for reviewing work-in-progress and to provide constructive critique and feedback to support the development of the project.

Field Trips

Each ADS may offer the opportunity to take a study trip to test research and practice in the field. Fieldtrips are a tool to enable students to engage in site-specific understanding and knowledge of architectural questions, spatial challenges and opportunities, while also learning from precedent and case-study.

Field trips, site visits and day trips may be included in all of the units but are not compulsory and are an enhancement of the student experiences. All field trips/visits will be at your own expense.

Practice Mentors

In your second year you will be offered the opportunity to engage with a practice mentor that offers you another voice on your work, but also can offer guidance on professional development and industry engagement. The Practice Mentors scheme offers you a window into the working processes of some of the UK's leading designers and helps to maintain links to industry during your Master's programme. Exposure and understanding of varied working methods and practice cultures supports you in being reflective your own ambitions.

Public Outputs

Exhibition and making public are an important element of the discipline and an opportunity to explore forms of dissemination and receive feedback from a public audience. Students will participate in the Work-in-Progress (WIP) event, exhibiting within their ADS as a collective group. Year 2 students will exhibit their thesis project as part of their final unit.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found here. Please note that College regulations are subject to annual updates and amendments.

Unit assessment

YEAR 1

Students are taught in the same ADS for the full academic year for Studio I, II & III with each unit a progression from one to another supporting you to develop a detailed and sophisticated design response to your own field of enquiry. This project also serves as the basis for your technical studies. In developing your project topic and design, your studio tutors may set smaller exercises and briefs that inform the overall project. As part of the studio practice and research we encourage all ADS to engage externally through the live project, partnering outside the institution and exploring the public role of the work.

Studio I

Studio I forms the basis for the briefing and strategy for the Studio II & Studio III project. The Studio I work is assessed via an oral presentation at the end of Term 1 review and collective presentation of the ADS in the WIP event. You are required to submit a digital copy of your research work and presentation materials for the WIP event.

Studio II

Studio II develops the project of Studio I. The work is assessed in an oral presentation of the design project in Term 2 review. You are required to submit a digital copy of the design in progress and associated research materials relative to their enquiry.

Studio III

Studio III is the final development of the individual design project initiated in Studio I and developed over Terms 2 & 3. The final project should be developed and communicated through the production of drawings, models, digital models, moving images and processes of making.

Studio III is assessed via an exam presentation. During the presentation students are asked to present their portfolio of work to a panel for assessment via oral presentation. This presentation is followed by questions and feedback. The design portfolio will be required to be submitted digitally in advance of the formal presentation. Included in the portfolio is a critical reflection on the WIP event, including visual material.

The successful completion of Studio II will determine your progression into YR2.

Technical Studies I, Technical Studies II

Technical Studies is developed in relation to the YR1 studio project conducted in Studios I, II & III. Technical Studies I will be assessed via an oral presentation at the end of Term 2. Technical Studies II develops on the work of Technical Studies I and shows the development and collation of the technical proposals into the Technical Studies Journal, which is submitted in Term 3. Technical Studies assesses the development and integration of technical knowledge and skills in the design process, establishing the successful coordination between design intention and conceptual frameworks and the requirements of structure, construction, environment, life-safety and policy.

Media Studies I

Situated in the School of Architecture and welcoming a student cohort from across multiple spatial design disciplines, Media Studies provides a rigorous and granular examination of historical and contemporary methodologies of media practice and research. Our collective goal is to increase critical engagement with media. We achieve this through lectures, tutorials, and workshops in which new approaches to media are conceptualised, refined, and implemented in innovative proposals and projects.

AcrossRCA

Across **terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support you to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing you together to work collaboratively in cross-programme interdisciplinary teams. In your team you will develop a self-initiated themed project, informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to collectively use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that creative practices can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

YEAR 2

Design Strategy

You will be assessed through reviews and submission of a written project thesis and brief, with supporting visual documentation. The Design Strategy forms the basis for the briefing and strategy for the IRP. The research and initial design proposals emerging from the design strategy are presented as part of the work-in-progress event.

Studio III Independent Research Project

The IRP is the culmination of the MA degree and provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate that you have fulfilled the programme objectives and achieved the necessary professional standard. The IRP is assessed via a formal presentation and a written critical reflection on the final exhibition.

The formal presentation will focus on the completed 'Thesis Project', which will be displayed as appropriate for review. You are also required to submit a portfolio containing project work, design process and thesis research, from both years of the course. All work will be required to be submitted digitally in advance of the formal presentation.

The critical reflection on the final exhibition will comprise a written critical reflection, with supporting visual documentation.

History & Theory Studies I

The HTS unit helps students build a systematic understanding of the history of architecture, constructing a shared knowledge, methodology, and vocabulary so that students can define their own position and lines of research enquiry. History and Theory Studies requires attendance at the lectures and seminar sessions. History and Theory Studies I is assessed via an oral presentation as part of the seminar discussions and a written paper.

Professional Practice Studies I

Professional Practice Studies gives you an understanding of the professional and ethical duties and responsibilities of the Architect, contractual, planning, policy and legal frameworks and principals of business management. You are encouraged to best understand how to apply and work within these frameworks to best suits your chosen forms of practice and career path. Professional Practice Studies requires attendance at the seminar series as a key component of the unit. Professional Practice Studies is assessed via an oral presentation as part of the seminar discussions and submission of a written 'case study'.

Elective Units

The elective units allow Year 2 students choose between 2 possible electives of 15-credits to further deepen an aspect of their research and practice.

History & Theory Studies II (elective)

History & Theory Studies II builds on the lectures and seminars of History & Theory I into a rigorous theoretical exploration of the student's chosen topic. This unit enables you to identify a personal position through engagement with a broader cultural framework in support of the independent research project. Assessment is via a written submission, with supporting visual documentation.

Media Studies II (elective)

Media Studies I builds on the work of Media Studies I in the first year to support you in developing your own personal position towards the mediation of your practice. Assessment is through the development of a project that is formally presented and digitally submitted.

Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the unit descriptors, and will be available to you at the beginning of the academic year.

Additional Assessments/Programme Requirements

The MA Architecture programme is a professional Part 2 award as accredited by ARB and validated by RIBA. All students are assessed against the ARB/RIBA Part 1&2 Graduate Criteria and Part 2 Graduate Attributes as published by ARB.

For more information on pathways to professional architectural registration please refer to ARB and RIBA websites.

7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 240 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units. If you do not pass a unit at the first attempt, you may be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful at resit you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8. Will I get any professional accreditation?

The MA Architecture is a professionally accredited Part II architecture degree.

- Architects Registration Board (ARB) Part II degree
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Students are responsible for following the requirements of professional accreditation and remaining current on their Professional Experience Development Record (PEDR).
- The pathway to professional accreditation requires the completion of 3 degrees of study and professional placement experience entitling the recipient to professional accreditation and the

use of the title Architect under Section 20 of the Architects Act 1997.

- For detailed information on the pathways to professional accreditation
- <http://www.arb.org.uk/information-for-schools-of-architecture/prescription-process/>
- <https://www.architecture.com/education-cpd-and-careers/how-to-become-an-architect>

The MA Arch programme maintains its validation with ARB through annual monitoring and revalidation every 5 years, with RIBA through revalidation processes every 5-6 years.