



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	MA Environmental Architecture
Award:	Master's
Qualification Framework level:	7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Architecture
Campus location(s):	Kensington
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to	2026-27

2. Programme Philosophy

Earth systems are changing. The globe is warming as a result of CO² emissions, with dramatic consequences in the form of abnormal and intensified climatic events such as floods or fires. At the same time, a series of related metabolic rifts, from ecosystem loss to species extinction, ocean water acidification, desertification, and the resulting loss of livelihoods, compound to generate environmental destruction and social tensions in the form of wars, famines and mass migrations. The underlying causes of these momentous shifts lie within the environmental and territorial architectures of capitalist modes of production, globalised through colonisation and development policies, and their discriminatory and racial logics. New environmental architectures are urgently needed.

The aim of MA Environmental Architecture is to constitute a new field of knowledge production and practice concerned with the design of alternative forms of co-dependence between life forms and earth systems. The MA Environmental Architecture is a design-led and field-focused course that emphasises a transdisciplinary approach to design research. The programme proposes a unique approach to environmental architecture education that brings together architectural and ethnographic research methods with the use of technoscientific tools for analysing, classifying, and producing environmental data.

At the same time, you are exposed to the perspectives of those in the frontlines of environmental struggles across the world, to histories and theories of environmental change, and to the most recent advances in the related fields of environmental law and climate justice.

Through its *Studio* unit, the programme will provide you with the opportunity to engage with live projects in sites of complex environmental change, to work with experts from other disciplines, such as lawyers, geologists or biologists, and to embark on multiple-day field trips where you will be able to engage stakeholders and meet local communities, while testing and exploring environmental research and analysis methods.

The MA Environmental Architecture aims to expand the scope and content of design-led

research in the field of architecture, landscape architecture, environmental studies and territorial management. Possible areas of inquiry can include sustainable forms of urbanisation; concepts of stewardship and care for nature; environmental change and its effect on migration and settlement patterns; climate justice adaptation to land use practices; impacts of resource extraction on ecosystems; environmental impacts of the energy transition; post-development and degrowth; indigenous struggles for land and environments; among many others.

You will have the opportunity to pursue a degree within a world leading art and design institution, and to access the rich culture of radical and experimental interdisciplinary work at the Royal College of Art. Moreover, the programme will help you to establish a network of colleagues and mentors by offering them the opportunity of connecting to leading figures in Environmental Architecture both in London and internationally through an innovative practice mentorship scheme.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

The programme aims to:

- Define the practice of environmental architecture and become its leading programme, contributing to the re-invention of contemporary knowledge on environmental design and research;
- Expose students to unique and paradigmatic situations of environmental or climate change across the world;
- Contribute to the ongoing and global effort of imagining and designing alternative forms of co-existence on Earth;
- Promote an interdisciplinary working and research ethos where students develop their individual skills while learning to work with colleagues, research partners and stakeholders in a collaborative environment;
- Create an outstanding academic platform that provides students with systematic and in-depth knowledge of environmental research and practice informed by the most recent scholarship and technological innovations;
- Provide students with critical and technical skills that allow them to pursue independent research and to apply advanced, practice-based knowledge to the field of environmental architecture and design.

Learning Outcomes

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

You should be able to:

- Formulate original research questions that contribute to knowledge in environmental architecture and address contemporary climatic and environmental problems;
- Independently plan or produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of environmental architecture and related fields;
- Master forms of collaborative and transdisciplinary knowledge production;
- Devise and implement original methods of environmental analysis, representation and intervention;
- Develop comprehensive and imaginative ways to effectively communicate complex environmental questions to non-specialist audiences;
- Evaluate existing forms of professional practice and propose viable alternatives beyond the conditions defined by the private sector and public institutions;
- Critically assess your responsibilities as a practitioner in light of the likely environmental, social, and economic impacts of your research and design practice.

4. What Will I Learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
--------	--------	--------

Research Studio I: Architectures of Extraction (15 credits)	Research Studio II: Environmental Interventions (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
Seminar I: Critical Canon (15 credits)	Seminar II: Critical Compositions (15 credits)	
Media Studies (15 credits)	School-wide elective (15 credits)	
AcrossRCA (15 credits)	Core Skills (15 credits)	

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Research Studio I: Architectures of Extraction	1	15	Core
Media Studies I	1	15	Core
Seminar I: Critical Canon	1	15	Core
AcrossRCA	1	15	Core
School-Wide Elective	2	15	Elective
Research Studio II: Environmental Interventions	2	15	Core
Seminar II: Critical Compositions	2	15	Core
Core Skills	2	15	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

AcrossRCA

In term 1, 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.

Core Skills

In term 2, you will take Core Skills. This unit supports you in developing the academic and professional skills needed to advance your individual work at the RCA and beyond. Building on

Term 1, it prepares you for the IRP in term 3 by deepening key transferable skills. Centred on three themes - Making Meaning, Making Together, and Making Public - the unit strengthens critical, collaborative, and communicative capacities within and beyond your disciplinary context. In MA Environmental Architecture this unit will focus on critical engagement with policy and legal frameworks that shape potential impacts of and modes of practice for environmental architecture.

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.

Independent Research Project

The purpose of the Independent Research Project (IRP) is to enable you to apply the intellectual, technical and professional skills that you have developed throughout the programme to a challenging self-set brief. The IRP can be developed either individually or in group, and it should be based on the proposition for intervention developed in *Research Studio II, Environmental Interventions*. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the theme of the studio while pursuing your own research interests.

The IRP includes a public presentation of work and exhibition, alongside peers from your programme, and following the conclusion of taught elements of the unit. This activity will help you to present the key design intentions of your work orally and visually. Focus will be given to forms of representing and communicating complex environmental issues, with a particular focus on exploring environmental aesthetics. You can make use of a variety of media including film, animation, models, drawings or other as adequate.

IRP teaching consists of studio-based tutorials and seminar sessions focusing the written components. Additionally, you will require access to technical facilities and the library.

The IRP can be submitted through project or by thesis, and across a multiplicity of media and formats, from drawings, to film, animation or model making.

Particular focus will be given to forms of representing and communicating complex environmental issues and research to both academic and non-academic audiences. This might include exhibition, performance or the organisation of seminars/public events.

There are three 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.

5. How Will I Learn?

Research Studio:

The programme's main teaching method is the Research Studio (RS). Within the Environmental Architecture Research Studio (EA RS), each research stream investigates a contemporary and paradigmatic case study at the frontline of environmental or climate change, in a 4-year cumulative research project. Within the context of the EA RS, students develop an affiliation to a research stream during term 1 and pursue that research stream more directly during term 2.

Each new cohort builds on or adds to work developed during the previous year. This unique format promotes multi-year relations between student cohorts and alumni. Moreover, the 4-year project allows establishing long-term relationships with stakeholders and partners on the ground, and the development of a stronger collective contribution to the field.

LIVE project:

A LIVE project structures teaching in *Research Studio Unit 1: Architectures of Extraction*. The LIVE project consists of a collective research project. LIVE projects change every year, have a real-world output, and are devised in collaboration with partners on the ground as short-term intensive engagements. The LIVE project aims to place collaborations with non-academic organisations, engagement with real-world scenarios, and exposure to paradigmatic sites of environmental change at the centre of learning.

Individual and group tutorials:

For both *Research Studio* and *Seminar* units, a combination of one-to-one, small and large group tutorials will be conducted regularly between students and staff. Specialists and invited experts will also contribute depending on each unit's research interests and sites.

Field Trips/Study Visits:

National or international field trips are an enriching component of the programme's pedagogical model. MA Environmental Architecture focuses on case studies and organises research around site-specific LIVE projects. Field trips enable you to work directly with diverse environmental conditions in their material and social dimensions, producing landscape and ecosystem analysis, documenting processes of change, and collaborating with local partners, stakeholders and practitioners. These engagements support the development and testing of environmental research methodologies and underscore the programme's approach to learning with sites and communities.

Where field trips/study visits are a core part of the teaching, these are mostly in the London area and you will only pay for travel expenses. Any extra-curricular visits/trips are optional and will be at your own expense.

Technical Learning:

Studio teaching is supported by technical workshops delivered by the RCA technical faculty and by invited specialists. Technical workshops aim to provide you with observational, imaging, documentation, and visualization techniques. You will be taught to examine new systems of representation, and your ability to create original and experimental spaces of intervention within the field.

Student-led Roundtables:

This is an essential teaching method that aims to foster autonomy and peer-to-peer learning processes in the *Seminar* units. Student-led roundtables provide a model where you are allowed to lead collective discussion and learning processes.

Lectures:

This includes lectures and presentations prepared by programme staff, School of Architecture staff, invited academics and practitioners. Apart from events organised by MA Environmental Architecture, you will be encouraged to follow the School's international lecture series, across school symposia and interdisciplinary forums organised by the School in collaboration with other academic institutions.

Critiques and reviews:

In *Studio* units, you will have to present your work to programme staff and invited critics multiple times each term. Panels will include School of Architecture staff, experts and specialists involved in the selected case studies or student project sites, UK-based and international academics and practitioners with a distinguished track record in environmental architecture and related fields, as well as the programme's practice mentors. Regular reviews will provide valuable opportunities for students to get feedback and to develop and improve their skills in oral presentation.

Practice Mentors:

A practice mentorship programme connects students to a network of practitioners through regular meetings taking place in Term 2 and 3 who will introduce students to different types of practice and career issues. Students will have opportunity to meet with different practices representing a variety of possible professional pathways they might be interested in after completing their studies. In doing so we hope professional practices and organizations might have a foundational role in your development.

In order to realise your work successfully you will be expected to attend:

- Briefing sessions
- Individual and group Tutorials

- Student-led roundtables
- Lectures
- Technical Workshops
- Progress reviews and critiques
- Field trips
- Public presentation of work
- Examinations and assessments

Your studies are divided into three terms and comprise scheduled staff-led time such as lectures, seminars and tutorials, as well as independent learning. Each term consists of 60 credits which equates to 600 study hours. During each week you should, as a full-time student, expect about 40 study hours. This is made up of two components:

- contact hours (approximately 5-10 per week) which involve timetabled interaction with tutors (for example, in seminars, critiques and tutorials), fostering intellectual exchange by way of clarifying concepts, addressing key questions and cultivating critical thinking;
- the time you dedicate to developing your work independently (in addition to the contact hours) by way of self-directed study which can include activities such as making in the workshops, working in the studio, conducting research or preparing for assessment.

The amount of time you spend in self-directed, independent study will normally increase as you progress to the final term, particularly as you focus on the public exhibition or completion of your work. The precise pattern of contact hours will vary by unit, term and mode of study.

6. Assessment and Feedback

Regulations

The programme is subject to the [Academic Regulations](#) of the Royal College of Art (*the regulations are subject to annual updates and amendments*).

Unit Assessment

The programme makes use of formative and summative assessment.

Assessment may include, but may not be limited to:

- Group submissions of project work
- Group presentations
- Individual presentations
- Oral presentations

- Blog posts
- Written research proposals
- Long-form written submissions (essays, thesis etc)
- Research Portfolio
- Viva Voce examination
- Public-facing presentation of work

Formative assessment:

You will receive oral feedback throughout the year. In the *Research Studio* units this will be given weekly by the studio tutor, and in the case of the *Seminar* units by the seminar tutors. Reviews with invited guests will provide valuable opportunities for you to get formative assessment on their design research and to develop and improve their skills in oral and visual presentation. Additionally, in their IRP Unit a Public Presentation of Work as part of a public event and exhibition will allow students to develop and improve their skills in oral and visual presentation.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of each unit. These are formal examinations of your work that evaluate your progress as you move through your studies. Further details will be included in the unit descriptors.

Studio Unit 1: project presentation (group) + portfolio (individual)

Seminar Unit 1: Film (or intellectual equivalent) + logbook (process documentation);

Elective Unit: 2000 words report (group)

Studio Unit 2: project presentation (group) + portfolio (individual) + 1500 words design brief

Seminar Unit 2: Essay (2000 words) and presentation.

IRP should include:

Submission by Project:

- Design Components (these can vary on media, format and /or size depending on each project);
- Portfolio of work: providing critical intellectual and material context to the IRP, from the original proposal up to the strategy for the public presentation of work. The portfolio of work should always be individual, even if students are submitting in groups.
- Written report of 1,500 words included in the Portfolio document. The report word count should be the same for individual and group submissions.

Submission by Thesis:

- Portfolio of work: providing critical intellectual and material context to the IRP, from the original proposal up to the strategy for the public presentation of work. The portfolio of work

should always be individual, even if students are submitting in groups.

- Thesis of 10,000 words, submitted independently from the Portfolio. Thesis word count should be the same for individual and group submissions. Complementary visual materials are allowed, such as maps, documents, films, or drawings.

Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the unit descriptors, shared at the beginning of the academic year.

7. What Award Can I Get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 180 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

Exit awards: If you have gained at least 60 credits at Level 7, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Certificate. 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.