



Programme Specification

Please note that this specification is subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. General information

Awarding institution:	Royal College of Art
Programme title:	MA Architecture
Award:	Masters; RIBA Part II
Qualification framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Architecture
Programme duration:	2-years
Total UK credits:	240 credits
Mode of study:	Full time
Partner(s) (if applicable):	ARB (last validated, 2020) and RIBA (last validated, 2019)
Date valid from/to:	2020-2021

2. Programme Philosophy

The MA Architecture sets out to inspire design innovation. The programme conceives of architecture as a diverse and complex set of practices that move beyond traditional distinctions and limits in the field. The programme expands the possibilities of architecture and its agency in the world by encouraging an independent and critical ethos among its students. Fostering a culture of independent postgraduate research and experimentation in design, underpinned by a strong connection to practice and the material reality of the discipline, is central to the pedagogy. Teaching aims to harness and extend student knowledge, skills and creativity, preparing them to engage critically with the world.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme Aims

The programme aims to:

- Test the limits of architectural practice and become a leading professional architecture degree worldwide;
- Contribute to the re-invention of contemporary knowledge, research and practice of architecture and related fields;
- Provide a rich and unique social and working environment that helps students to develop and demonstrate research, technical and design skills while allowing them to advance their professional and academic abilities;
- Provide students with critical skills that will allow them to position their own independent

research in design practice within the field and to evaluate and critically absorb current architectural knowledge, scholarship, theoretical and practice-based research;

- Expose students to an interdisciplinary ethos that proposes a unique and original way to conduct practice-based, design-led research, supporting students developing their individual skills whilst also learning to work with others in an interdisciplinary and collaborative environment;
- Initiate and support design-led experimentation and research that understands the relation between theory and practice of architecture;
- Prepare students technically for professional life and deliver the RIBA/ARB Part II validated degree covering all of the relevant criteria and graduate attributes towards professional accreditation;
- Test the broader cultural contexts of the discipline and encourage students to experiment and test the boundaries of architectural practice freely.

What will I be expected to achieve?

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

Educational criteria, research and staff development cross-fertilise, mirroring an important RCA value to bring 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.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Demonstrate engagement with the histories, theories, practices and technologies of architecture and the related arts, including their influence on architectural design, and to locate their practice within this context.
A2.	Demonstrate understanding of the role of the architect within society and the political, cultural and economic context of architectural design.
A3.	Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of intellectual developments and design practices in architecture.
A4.	Develop a 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.	Produce architectural designs that develop a conceptual critical approach to architecture and that integrate and satisfy the aesthetic aspects of a building and the technical requirements of its construction.
B2.	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.	Evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals.

B4.	Evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals.
B5.	Combine various media such as sketching, model-making and digital modelling and to switch fluidly and coherently between them.
B6.	Engage in a critical design process and develop designs iteratively through progressive stages of development, at progressive scales and demonstrations of complexity while maintaining consistency of intention.
B7.	Coherently communicate and demonstrate the creative application of appropriate theoretical concepts to studio design projects.
B8.	Develop the project to a level of completion that encapsulates its design philosophy with its physical manifestation.
B9.	Communicate the final project by means of drawings, models and other devices that make it accessible to other members of the profession and to lay audiences.
Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	Demonstrate the need to work within the constraints of planning policy, economic likelihood, the norms of the construction industry and to health and safety codes and other relevant regulations.
C2.	Understand the relationship between people, buildings, user needs and the impact of buildings on the environment.
C3.	Develop an 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.	Develop problem solving skills, professional judgement, and ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances.
C5.	Identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect.

4. What will I learn?

Year One

As MA students, the programme encourages you to pursue a personal line of enquiry during your time here. Over the course of the year first-year students work on a live project and a studio project that also forms the basis for the technical studies course. The first year projects respond to the Architectural Design Studio's thematic through their own brief developed out of their research, but within a defined scope established by the ADS tutors. Throughout the term tutors provide support and criticism as the projects develop. The year one studio work can be both individual and in groups, assessment at the end of the year is individual.

In addition to the ADS design teaching students have complementary units of study. First-year

students will take media studies, which is part of the School-wide offer, exposing students to a diverse range of contemporary and historical design and representation methods spanning architecture, visual arts, and science.

First-year students also engage in technical studies to understand the integral relationship between technical innovation and design experiment. Students will develop a working knowledge of, and the technical skills required to engage with the construction and engineering challenges associated with building design, structural systems, thermal comfort and issues of sustainability. This is through the technical development and resolution of the independent studio project and is extended into a full technical study resulting in the comprehensive design project (CDP) demonstrated in the Technical Studies Journal.

Year Two

In the second year, students take a number of units in the autumn term in preparation for the Independent Research Project. Second-year students work within the thematic and contextual frame of the ADS briefs, to develop a design brief from their research, a clear research question, and a design response in their thesis project. The Design Strategy unit includes a synopsis of student research, a clearly identifiable research question and methodology, a project brief and thesis that supports a strategic outline design and plan.

The History Theory Studies unit offers the MA students a cultural framework aimed at helping them to find a personal position with respect to the field. The lectures alternate between sessions held by the unit tutor and sessions held by invited guests. The unit builds a systematic understanding of the history of modern architecture, providing a methodology for students to investigate their own individual research themes. The lectures construct a shared vocabulary able to provide the school's diverse student body with a common critical background.

The other assessable component of second-year studies is Professional Practice, which is delivered through a series of lectures along with supporting tutorials and preparation of a case study.

The final two terms of study in the MA programme are dedicated to the Independent Research Project, which is tutored through the ADS. Students are required to develop a sophisticated, innovative and creative design response to the thesis question as established in the Strategic Design.

Critical and Historical Studies

Critical & Historical Studies is the cross-College platform that delivers teaching and activities aimed at enabling critical engagement to take place within, and between, the different disciplines at the RCA.

All studio-based first year MA students have a CHS unit as a core part of their programme of study, designed to enable this critical dialogue and enhance each student's development. Led by a team of dedicated, highly skilled and deeply engaged staff, CHS delivers a programme of lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials (both small group and one-to-one). Students will be encouraged to engage with vital and challenging ideas that relate to their practices. This both enriches and provides a broader intellectual framework within which to establish a coherent inter-relationship between theoretical and practice-based approaches to art and design.

As a team, our disciplinary interests span the fine and applied arts, architecture, design (including fashion, graphics, interior and product design), craft, communication, film, humanities, photography, digital media, science and technology.

CHS provides:

- contemporary, thought-provoking lectures by CHS staff and visiting tutors
- the opportunity for students to explore the theoretical background of their chosen discipline through a taught dissertation process
- individual and group tutorial support from our Programme's team of expert tutors

The CHS Handbook sets out the broad principles of CHS at the RCA. It outlines what you can expect of us and what we require of you to engage and produce work to your best ability. On the Moodle pages you will find details of the scheduled programme and the broad areas to be covered in each term, details about the tuition and assessment of your CHS dissertation, and information on resources that will help you during your studies.

Your main points of contact for CHS will be your group tutor and your School Liaison Tutor for your School. You will be assigned your group tutor at start of the Autumn Term.

Curriculum Map

STUDIO PROJECT 1 (40 CP)	
SCHOOLWIDE OFFER (20 CP)	TECHNICAL STUDIES (20 CP)
CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES (40 CP)	
DESIGN STRATEGY (20 CP)	
HISTORY THEORY STUDIES (20 CP)	INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT (60 CP)
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STUDIES (20 CP)	

5. How will I learn?

Please note that these are subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the Covid-19 response.

Architectural Design Studios (ADS)

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 made up of twelve Architectural Design Studios (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.

Students are issued with ADS briefs in advance of the start of the course. Each ADS has between 14-16 students with a mix of first and second year students.

Important to the ADS structure is peer learning with first- and second-year students working

together. The community of students in each ADS is itself an essential structure of the learning environment.

Tutorials

Students are guided through their project work through individual and group tutorials. Students will typically have an average of one tutorial per week with their ADS tutor/s. 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. Students are expected to come prepared for tutorials with work for constructive discussion and feedback.

Due to the response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, for 2020/21 tutorials will take place online, unless otherwise permitted by government guidelines and College policy.

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.

Due to the response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, for 2020/21 Seminars will take place online unless otherwise permitted by government guidelines and College policy.

Lectures

The programme hosts three lecture series: a history theory lecture series, a media studies lecture series and a technical studies series. These are complimented by the SoA international lecture series.

Due to the response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, for 2020/21 Lectures will take place online unless otherwise permitted by government guidelines and College policy.

Reviews

A review, pinup or 'crit' requires the presentation of the student work for feedback from a critics' panel 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 feedback and criticism to support the development of the project. Students will have crits within their ADS, and there are key shared milestones across the programme as part of the student formative assessment that take place in terms 2 & 3:

Year 1: Table Review

Year 2: Table Review

Year 2: Pre-exam Review

Due to the response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, for 2020/21 Tutorials will take place online unless otherwise permitted by government guidelines and College policy.

Field Trips

Subject to government guidance on travel and College policy, ADS may offer the opportunity to take a study trip to test research and practice in the field. Field trips are an engaging tool to enable students to develop site-specific understanding and knowledge of architectural questions and spatial challenges and opportunities whilst also learning from precedent and case-study.

Field Trips, site visits and day-trips may be included in all of the units and will be at the cost of the student.

Practice Mentors

Each second-year student is offered a practice mentor who gives the student another voice on their student work, but also can offer guidance on professional development and industry engagement. The mentors meet the students up to four times in total. Exposure and understanding of the working methods, approach and environment of each practice supports students in being reflective on alternative methods.

The aim of the RCA Practice Mentors programme is to offer students a window into the working processes of some of the UK's leading designers and to maintain links to industry during their master's degree. The mentor scheme is not core to teaching, but an additional form of support and engagement for students during their time at the College.

You may get the opportunity to participate in an exhibition of your student work, either during or at the conclusion of your studies. Your Programme Handbook should provide more information on the nature of this participation.

6. Assessment and feedback

Unit assessment

Studio Exam

In the summer term the Studio Exam is a formal examination for all first year students' studio work determining their progression onto second year. Students are asked to present their portfolio of work to the exam panel for assessment in a ten-minute presentation minimum. This is then followed by twenty minutes of questions and feedback, in total a thirty-minute allocation to each student. The outcome, alongside the assessment of all other units of study, will be a decision as to whether or not students will proceed onto the second year of the programme. All work will be required to be submitted digitally in advance of the exam. The studio exam will be conducted in person, if possible, subject to government and College policy, depending on the situation at the point of assessment. Should physical examination not be possible at the time of assessment, then the presentations and questions will be conducted online.

If at the student exam a student's work is considered to be a borderline fail, the student may be required to retrieve the work at a referral examination.

Final Exam

The Final Examination is the culmination of the MA degree, and provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the programme and that they have achieved the standard necessary for the award of Master's Degree.

The examination will focus on the completed 'Thesis Project' which will be displayed as appropriate for review. Students are also required to submit a digital portfolio and research journal containing project work, design process and thesis research. Each student's work is assessed by a panel of academics, and a sample of a cohorts' work is reviewed by an External Examiner. If the student's personal tutor is not present at the Final Examination, their report contributes to the overall assessment.

The Final Exam will be conducted in person, if possible, subject to government and College policy, depending on the situation at the point of assessment. Should physical examination not be possible at the time of assessment, then the presentations and questions will be conducted online.

The Final Examination is in two parts:

- a) A Viva-Voce, which takes place in the final term of a programme of study
- b) A School Examination Board, chaired by the Dean of School, will be held to recommend results to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline for ratification.

All work will be required to be submitted digitally in advance of the exam.

If at the Final Examination a student's work is considered to be a borderline fail, the student may be required to retrieve the work within an academic term, or at a referral examination within twelve months.

Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the Unit Descriptors, which will be available to you at the beginning of the academic year.

Additional Assessments/Programme Requirements

As part of student assessment, all students must have demonstrated successful attainment of the ARB/RIBA Part 2 Graduate Criteria and Graduate Attributes.

7. What award can I get?

The MA Architecture (ARB/RIBA Part 2) award is a 240 credit point professional Master's degree.

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

Will I get any professional accreditation?

The MA Architecture programme at the RCA is a RIBA validated and ARB prescribed Part II award, in alignment with professional qualifications of architectural education in the UK.

For students pursuing professional registration please refer to ARB and RIBA for a complete overview of all the requirements.

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a course of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full course of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Tier 4 visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Applications are considered chronologically by date and time of final portfolio submission. Whilst a programme still has vacancies, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. Once a programme becomes full, subsequent successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available for them.

Programme-Specific requirements

Students should have achieved a first degree (typically 2:1 or higher) in architecture (RIBA Part I) or an international equivalent degree or higher, and should have at least one year's work experience in a design office. If students wish to gain exemption from RIBA Part II, they must have completed their RIBA Part I satisfactorily.

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/architecture-ma/#requirements>