Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art and Design

Programme Specification
Subject to annual update

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 professional accredited degree as awarded by ARB and RIBA.
Date valid from/to:	2021-2026

2.   Programme Philosophy

The MA Architecture sets out to inspire design innovation. The programme conceives of architecture asa 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 anindependent 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 of practice.

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 tobring 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.

Students will be able to:

- Students are encouraged to test the limits of architectural practice and become a leading professional architecture degree worldwide;
- Students 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 students to develop and demonstrate research, technical and design skills while allowing them to advance their professional and academic abilities;
- The programme provides 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;
- The programme exposes students 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;
- Students are supported in design-led experimentation and research that understands the relation between theory and practice of architecture;
- Students are prepared technically for professional life and deliver the RIBA/ARB Part II validated degree by covering all of the relevant criteria and graduate attributes towards professional accreditation;
- Students 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 produceclear, 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 humanneeds 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
SWO (15CP)		
STUDIO I (15 CP)	STUDIO II (30 CP)	
	TECHNICAL STUDIES I (15 CP)	TECHNICAL STUDIES II (15 CP)
COLLEGE WIDE OFFER (30CP = T1 15CP / T2 15CP)		

YR2

T4	T5	T6
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE I (15CP)		
HISTORY THEORY STUDIES I (15CP)	ELECTIVE (15CP)	
DESIGN STRATEGY (15CP)	STUDIO II, 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
Technical Studies I	2	15	CORE
Technical Studies II	3	15	CORE
Media Studies II	2	15	ELECTIVE
College Wide Studies	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	5	15	ELECTIVE
School-wide unit	5	15	CORE
Studio IV, IRP	5&6	60	CORE

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 the student's skills, knowledge and experience developed over the course of the programme to develop a mature and sophisticated design project that clearly identifies the student's personal practice within the field.

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

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 students as they develop their own IRP. These themes assist students in identifying their own interests and defining their practice. The ADS themes are designed to work alongside and feed

into the key research agendas of the School and the Strategic plan of the College.

While ADS themes and briefs change each year, they work within a common framework. The ADS structure provides the students with the tools and methodology to conduct post-graduate researchwithin which they 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-yeardesign studio courses. This is conducted through a vertically integrated unit system of ADS with diverseand 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 programme and are invited to vote in orderof preference for each ADS following brief presentations from the tutors. Students are allocated to ADS based on an entrance interview with the tutors scheduled in response to student preferences. Each ADShas 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 alongsideone 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
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 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.

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

Reviews
A review, pinup or 'crit' requires a formal presentation of the student 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 feedback and criticism 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 and will be at the cost of the student.

Practice Mentors
Each student is assigned a practice mentor that offers the student another voice on their student work but also can offer guidance on professional development and industry engagement. The mentors meet the students four times in total, twice at their offices and twice at the College. 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.

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

Studio I
Studio I forms the basis for the briefing and strategy for the Studio II & Studio III project and students will also participate in live project. The Studio I work is assessed via an oral presentation at the end of Trimester 1 review. The Studio I work will be presented collectively within the ADS as part of the Trimester 2 WIP show.

Studio II
Studio II develops the project of Studio I. The work is assessed via a 1000wd critical reflection on the WIP show exhibition and an oral presentation of the design project at the end of Trimester 2 review.

Studio III
Studio III is the final development of the individual design project initiated in Studio I and developed over trimesters 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 in 10min. oral presentation. This presentation is followed by 20min. of 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 show of 1000 words including visual material.

The successful completion of Studio II will determine student 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. Technical Studies I will be assessed via an oral presentation at the end of Trimester 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 Trimester 3.

School Wide (Media Studies I)
Media Studies I aims to increase our students' critical engagement with media and space. Lectures are delivered by staff and invited guests and introduce a range of media and spatial practice methodologies. In the tutorials, students learn specific skills related to their section and deploy their research through theexecution of new media-based projects. The unit's mission is twofold: first to encourage the incoming MA students from disparate programmes to increase their cross-disciplinary communication and secondly to challenge the students to expand their media practice beyond architecture's reliance on media as purely representational.

College-wide unit

Across **Terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in the **College-wide** unit. This unit aims to support students to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing them together to work collaboratively on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to 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 the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

YEAR 2

Design Strategy

Students will be assessed through reviews and submission of a written project thesis and brief of up to 3,000 words, with supporting visual documentation. The Design Strategy forms the basis for the briefing and strategy for the IRP

Studio III Independent Research Project

The IRP is the culmination of the MA degree and provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate they have fulfilled the programme objectives and achieved the necessary professional standard. The IRP is assessed via a formal presentation and 1000wd critical reflection on the Final Show exhibition.

The formal presentation will focus on the completed 'Thesis Project', which will be displayed as appropriate for review. Students are also required to submit a portfolio containing project work, design process and thesis research, from both years of the course. The presentation will be assessed by a panel and a sample of a cohort's work reviewed by an External Examiner. All work will be required to be submitted digitally in advance of the formal presentation.

The critical reflection on the Final Show exhibition will comprise a 1,000 critical reflection, with supporting visual documentation.

The results of the IRP assessment will be submitted to a School Examination Board, chaired by the Dean of School, that will recommend results to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline for ratification. If the IRP project is considered to be a borderline fail, the student may be required to retrieve the work within an academic Trimester, or at a referral examination within twelve months.

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 1200wd written paper.

Professional Practice Studies I

Professional Practice Studies gives students an understanding of the professional duties and responsibilities of the Architect, planning and policy and legal frameworks and principals of business management. Students are encouraged to best understand how to apply and work within these frameworks to best suits their 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 Studiesvia an oral presentation as part of the seminar discussions and submission of a written 'case study' of up to 5,000wd.

Elective

Yr2 Students choose between 2 possible electives of 15cp to further deepen and aspect of their research and practice they wish to pursue.

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 students to identify a personal position through engagement with a broader cultural framework in support of the independent research project. Assessment is via a written 750wd draft submission and a final 5,000wd written submission, withsupporting visual documentation.

Media Studies II (elective)

Media Studies I builds on the work of Media Studies I in the first year to support the student to develop their own personal position towards the mediation of their practice. Assessment is through thedevelopment 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 students at the beginning of the academic year.

Additional Assessments/Programme Requirements

If your programme has additional requirements for successful completion (eg. Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements), please include full details here.

Delete section if not applicable

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7.   What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA Architecture 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 fail a unit at the first attempt, you will 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 revalidationevery 5 years, with RIBA through revalidation processes every 5-6 years.

9. 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 programme 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 programme 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

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