



1. General Information

Award	Programme Title	Duration	Mode of Study
MA (RCA)	Architecture (PART II RIBA)	2 Years	Full-time

Awarding Institution	Royal College of Art
Teaching Institution	Royal College of Art
Professional Accreditation	Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) part II and Architects Registration Board (ARB) validated since 1983. Previous RIBA validation: 2013 Previous ARB validation: 2016
Qualifications Framework Level	7
Credit Value	240 UK credits
Date of most recent validation	May 2017
Programme Specification Date	2017/2018

2. Philosophy of the Programme

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 of the Programme

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, 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.

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 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.

4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme

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
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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.



5. Programme Structure and Curriculum

Programme Overview

First Year

As MA students, the programme encourages you to pursue a personal line of enquiry during your time here. First year students work on a live project in term 1, and a studio project in terms 2&3 that also forms the basis for the technical studies course. The first year projects respond to the ADS thematic through their own brief developed out of their research, but within in a defined scope established by the ADS tutors. Throughout the term tutors provide support and criticism as the projects develop.

In addition to the ADS design teaching students have complementary studies. First-year students will take media studies, which is part of the school-wide offer, which exposes 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 the technical stream of courses to understand the integral relationship between technical innovation and design experiment. Students will develop a working knowledge of and 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.

Critical & Historical Studies

The RCA provides a unique environment for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon their own practice, and to engage with students from their own and other disciplines. Critical & Historical Studies (CHS) supports the studio’s critical engagement.

The courses offered to first year studio-based MA students by CHS propose an intellectual framework within which they ought to establish a coherent relationship between theory and practice.

CHS includes a series of College-wide seminars and lectures. The first series will relate to your particular discipline (though it is possible to elect to join a series being offered to students on other programmes) whereas the second series will be more broad-based and cross-disciplinary in nature.

A CHS tutor will give you individual tutorials to support the development of a dissertation. The dissertation should be between 6,000 – 10,000 words in length – this is a major piece of work and you will be not be able to submit for the Final Examination until you have passed this assessment.

Second Year

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 Strategic Design 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 HTS course 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 course tutor and sessions held by invited guests. The course 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.

Programme Units and Credit Ratings

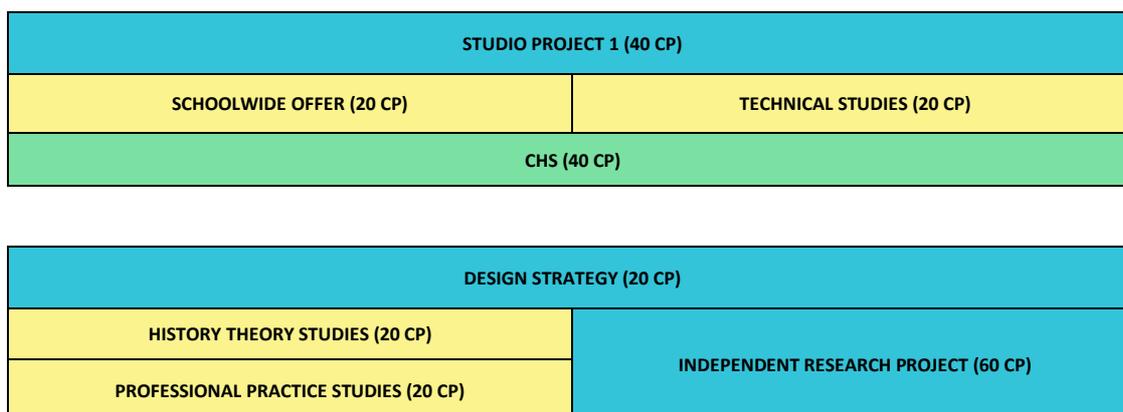
Year 1

- School Wide Course, 20 Credits
- Studio 1, 40 Credits
- Technical Studies, 20 Credits
- Critical Historical Studies (CHS), 40 Credits

Year 2

- Design Strategy, 20 Credits
- History and Theory Studies, 20 Credits
- Professional Practice Studies, 20 Credits
- Studio 2, independent research project, 60 Credits

Programme Curriculum Map



6. Learning and Teaching Methods

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 seven 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 and are invited to vote on order of 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 ADS has between 14-16 students, balanced with equal numbers of first and second years.

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

Students are guided through their project work through individual and group tutorials. Students will have a minimum of one individual 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.

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 theory lecture series, a media studies lecture series and a technical studies series. These are complimented by the SoA international lecture series and a student-led series.

Reviews



A review, pinup or 'crit' requires a formal 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.

Field Trips

Each ADS has 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.

Additional site visits and day-trips may be included in all of the units.

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.

7. Assessment

General

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found in the College Regulations, sections 2.7 – 2.10.

Interim Examination

In the summer term the Interim Examination is a formal examination for all first year students determining their progression onto second year. Students are asked to will 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, totally thirty-minute allocation to each student. The outcome will be a decision as to whether or not students will proceed onto the second year of the programme.

Final Examination

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 achieve



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 portfolio containing project work, design process and thesis research, from both years of the course. Each student's work is assessed by a panel of academics, and a sample of a cohort's work is reviewed by an External Examination. If your Personal Tutor is not present at the Final Examination, their report contributes to the overall assessment.

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.

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.

For more information please see the [RCA regulations](#).

8. Admissions

Cross-College Requirements

Entry is based on a high standard of final-year undergraduate work (as reflected in portfolio or degree classification), or on advanced work of an equivalent level. Your work must also demonstrate a maturity and readiness to undertake postgraduate studies.

You 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 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.

Upon entry to any of the College's programmes you should be able to demonstrate:

The potential to benefit from and contribute to the programme of study or research for which you are applying.

Prior knowledge and experience indicating the potential to achieve the independence necessary for postgraduate study in a specialist discipline.

Enthusiasm and aptitude to confront the issues to be addressed in preparation for a future professional career.

Applicants should normally be aged over 21 years by 1 September of the proposed year of admission.

Candidates for all MA courses are assessed on their existing qualities as demonstrated in their work and in their interview, as well as on their potential to benefit from the course and to achieve MA



standards overall. The assessment will consider: creativity, imagination and innovation evident in the work, ability to articulate the intentions of the works; intellectual engagement in the relevant areas; appropriate technical skills, overall interview performance including oral use of English.

Programme-Specific Requirements

Students should have achieved a high quality first degree 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.

Students are required to submit a completed RCA MA application form and a portfolio of completed student projects together with any relevant supporting design material. If students wish to gain exemption from RIBA Part II, they must have completed their RIBA Part I satisfactorily. Design and critical thinking are prioritised in the examination.

Admission exams are conducted with the Dean or the Head of Programme.

9. Quality Indicators

Refer to the Academic Development Handbook for more details of the College’s quality and standards procedures.

- All academic programmes at the Royal College of Art are revalidated on a six-yearly cycle. Revalidations involve external subject experts and internal panel members appointed by the College’s Academic Standards Committee (ASC).
- Programmes are required to submit an annual Review, the primary purpose of which is to evaluate the experience of students enrolled on both its MA and MPhil / PhD courses.
- External Examiners are appointed for a maximum of three years to ensure that:
 - the academic standard for each award is set and maintained at an appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
 - the standards of awards are comparable with those of other UK higher education institutions;
 - the process of assessment and examination is fair and has been fairly conducted.
- An Internal Moderator is appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of ASC to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the objective assessment of student work and to ensure comparability of examination practices between programmes within the College.
- Students have the opportunity to provide feedback through regular programme-level meetings (at least one each year considers the delivery of the MA programme and the External Examiner report); and through an annual College-wide MA student survey. A Student Representative Council brings forward issues from Course Forums and programme-level meetings to the President and Vice-President of the Students’ Union who then, where appropriate, present these issues at College committees or to the Senior Management of the College.