# Course Specification

MA Architecture

2018-19 (MAARC)

## School of Art, Architecture & Design

## Award and programme title: MA Architecture

## Level of qualification: Level 7

## Interim awards available:

| Award | Title | Level |
|-------|-------|-------|
| PG Dip | Architectural Studies | 7 |
| PG Cert | Architectural Studies | 7 |

## Length and status of programme and mode of study

| Programme | Length (years) Status (FT/PT/SW) | Mode (campus-based / DL or other) |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| **MA Architecture** | **1 year FT** | **Campus-based** |
| **MA Architecture** | **2 years PT** | **Campus-based** |

## Course Specification

### Overview and Aims

Course Overview

The students enrolled on the MA Architecture benefit from being part of the larger MArch cohort. As such, students are able to immerse themselves in many potential areas of in-depth study including: critical urban practice, community engagement, ecological urbanism, post-capitalism, critical technology, parametric design, and the prototyping and testing of manufactured objects. The course seeks to educate students through strong research methodologies that inform research-led design and critical reflection.

Course Aims

To further the understanding of the nature of architecture and to advance knowledge and the practice of architecture.
To develop specialist knowledge in architecture which complement architectural design and practice.

To continue to provide an effective coherent and vocationally relevant postgraduate education in architecture.

To introduce students to postgraduate research and develop appropriate design research philosophies, methodologies, skills, knowledge and critical judgment appropriate for advanced studies in architecture.

To develop professional communication skills and presentation techniques appropriate to the particular subject of postgraduate study.

To instil self-motivation, self-reliance and personal responsibilities for the definition of the focus of continuing education and professional development.

To develop the student's ability to personally initiate, develop, programme and undertake a research project in an area of architecture.

## Course Learning Outcomes

| 1 | Critically examine different theories and methodologies that inform the study of architecture and apply them to design scenarios. |
|---|---|
| 2 | Develop a critical argument calling on resources from research into design practice, design development, and written texts. |
| 3 | Contextualise their research and design work within the broader framework of the architectural technological canon. |
| 4 | Apply a reasoned and thoughtful approach to the in-depth study of an architecture related subject, critically evaluating information and communicating its significance with clarity. |
| 5 | Show competency in literature searching and information retrieval. Through so doing, students must be able to solve problems that require integration of information from a wide variety of sources that calls on the architectural expertise of others. |
| 6 | Appropriately present, to an acceptable professional and academic standard for a Master's study, the formulation of a dissertation or design proposal in an area of architecture that engages in a research process and formulates a hypothesis or design question. |

## Course Structure

| | Level 7 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | Semester 1 | Core (Y) | Semester 2 | Core (Y) |
| | *Design Studio A* | *Y* | *Design Studio B* | *Y* |
| | *Critical Context* | *Y* | *Research Methods* | *Y* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Semester 3 | | | |
| *Design Studio C* | Y | | |
| | | | |

# Learning and Teaching

Details relating to contact hours and other key information sets (KIS) are available on the course page of our Online Prospectus on our website.

### Learning and Teaching Approaches

The Learning and Teaching Strategies are formulated to give support, structure and coherence to the programme in developing the requisite professional and academic skills for a Master's Level Architecture Degree. They provide students with opportunities for personal and academic growth in a responsive learning environment. Teaching and learning methods adopted by the Course reflect a student-centred "applied learning" approach with Design Studio as the main focus of activity. Design Studio is both a collective and an individual learning and teaching activity relating to the problem-based projects taking place in the studio environment.

The design projects set in Design Studio formally link and integrate with the other subject modules in the curriculum as co-requisites for contributing to the development of an integrated 'holistic' design approach. Alternatively, a student's design approach in Design Studio may independently draw on and integrate knowledge, skills and understanding gained in one or more of the subject modules studied.

Each module within the MA Architecture course is designed to enhance and develop the student's ability for critical analysis through critical thinking and learning, challenging the student in numerous ways. Design Studio A & B encourage the participation of community engagement and discussion. This understanding leads to the process of design and critical reflection that is practiced within these modules. Outputs additional to the assessed criteria are also encouraged. Research Methodologies and Critical Context discuss opportunities for conference papers and/or journal articles to be written and submitted to a wide audience. It is the outcome of Design Studio C however that will develop the MA Architecture's identity. It represents the culmination of study. The work is presented at an exhibition to which academics and professionals from various disciplines are invited.

The course's creative and diverse nature provides a stimulating and broad education, equipping students with an armoury of transferable skills which enhance their employability in general. Presentations and field visits serve not only to provide context to the creative process but also to inspire students so that they approach their learning in a purposeful and enthusiastic way. Group work is an element in all levels of the course, enabling students from

a diversity of backgrounds to work together to a common purpose while at the same time respecting each other's views.

Design Studio A
The module aims to introduce the student to the level of design thinking needed in post-graduate architectural studies, and in particular the specialisms associated with their choice of studio.

Design Studio is a series of open-ended, problem based learning modules, specifically aimed at developing integrated solutions to architectural research and design problems. The MA Architecture takes a studio-based approach to this, offering a series of studios (themed design groups) taught by staff in the area of their own particular specialisms and interests. Students start the year by electing to join a studio, which helps them develop their own interests and specialism. The three studio units (DS A, B, and C) are contiguous, offering a continued development of student's design thesis, through the duration of the course.

Design Studio A is an introductory module, which allows the student to engage with a wide range of issues specific to their elected specialist theme, and consists typically of several small projects. The work is open-ended and speculative, aimed particularly at developing creative ways of working with particular contexts to develop architectural narratives and forms.

Design Studio B with integrated Critical Technology
The module begins to develop, within the Studio Theme, a research-based approach to architectural design, with particular emphasis on the contexts of architecture.

Studio B is the first part of the student's major design thesis project. The module is an explorative one, allowing the student time to develop design propositions about context and brief that will lead on to the development of a research-based scheme in Design Studio C.

The module is supported by the integrated Critical Technology module which forms an intellectual basis for the work. This element is designed to contextualise the student's research and design work within a broader framework of the technological canon. To this end the module's subsidiary aims are:
- To investigate new technologies and their trajectories and impacts on the future built environment.
- To develop a research-based, critical view of the production of architecture with particular emphasis on sustainable design.
- To foster the development of a critical faculty and the ability to use verbal and graphical means to define various architectural approaches.

Design Studio C
Studio C is the final studio where the student engages directly with their chosen specialism. The aim of the third design practice studio is to **synthesise**, **present** and **contextualise** the student's thesis project. Here the work culminates in the production of a leading-edge proposition in architecture/ urbanism.

Design Studio C, typically takes the form of a 12-16,000-word essay, or a 5-8,000-word Research & Development project. The topic is student-chosen and relates to research

previously undertaken in the contextual studies module and requires students to individually investigate/research contemporary issues in architecture. The students are encouraged to choose a subject area based upon the various specialisms and areas of interest on offer from staff within the school. A reading list is made available to the student relating to these research interests, with the intent that the texts guide the student's choice of subject area. Whilst the module consists primarily of individual-based learning, regular tutorial and seminar sessions are provided throughout semester 3, so that the students always have access to guidance and support.

Critical Context

The module offers students a platform for theoretical and critical discourse in architecture, and opens up an interdisciplinary dialogue in the field of architecture, the arts, critical theory, and related disciplines. The module provides intellectual and critical rigor, and offers a historical perspective and cultural context to architectural design, practice and research.

To this end the module aims:
To acquaint the student with mainstream and alternative architectural positions, and to present contemporary architecture and architectural theories.

To foster the development of a critical faculty and the ability to use verbal and graphical means to define various architectural approaches.
To support a deeper understanding of studio work through critical reflection in a wider field of reference and offer an overall framework to enable students to pursue a personal research interest.

Research Methods

The module aims:
- To develop approaches to and understandings of design research and a critical awareness of its applicability.

To enable students to prepare a project proposal in anticipation of the Final Project.

**Learning and Teaching Activities**

Student-centred learning is central to all design programmes and there are elements of student centred learning in all modules where exploration, investigation or research is required.

Studio tuition aims to develop the student's critical response in relation to the design and contextual approach to the brief. Tuition is undertaken on both an individual and group basis. Discussion between students is encouraged to enable cross-learning. An emphasis is placed on small group and individual tuition, as appropriate, in order to support individual student development. Topics may relate to architectural design projects, project programmes, design criticism, etc.

Seminars, group discussions or workshops take place to address specific design problems, technical issues or contextual design interventions. Students may work in groups to reach a specific goal or to test a hypothesis.
Reviews occur at stages during and at the end of design modules. Individual students give a verbal presentation of their drawn or modelled solutions to peers and staff. Reviews are seen

as essential training in self-presentation, communication of design ideas and a source of formative feedback.

**Graduate Attributes (UG only)**

**N/A**

**Use of the Virtual Learning Environment**

The chosen VLE of AAD is the internally developed faculty website CAGD:
http://cagd.leedsBeckett.ac.uk/public/

All modules use CAGD as a repository of documents and presentations for students to access. Therefore, all lectures, hand-outs and information given by staff will be available via CAGD. In a similar way, any student presentations or group work is to be uploaded to CAGD such that all students may have access to it, and hence the access to the knowledge contained within. CAGD also facilitates communication with students through posting notices or sending group emails.

**Use of Blended-Learning**

No modules are delivered online.

## Assessment Strategy

The course approach to assessment employs a range of methodologies appropriate to a postgraduate course in an architectural discipline. The assessment method is determined by the module typology.

For instance, in the Design Studio modules formative assessment is provided through project design reviews which give the opportunity for students to verbally/graphically explain their design proposals at interim stages of the project development and receive feedback from staff. These weekly timetabled reviews, together with other informal feedback in the studio, provide formative assessment, well-spaced through the module, as recommended in the Course Development Principles. Assessment is project-focused, based on process and outcome and is therefore specifically intended to prepare students for the reality of the workplace. Details vary from project to project. However, process is normally assessed by elements such as a notebook or project file that students use for research, design exploration and development. Peer assessment can assess the process of group work. Outcomes of design projects are assessed through submitted drawings and/or models.

Other modules such as Research Methodologies and Critical Context have differing submission components:
Essay based submissions are marked against the set criteria of: Topic Selection, Development of Argument, Logic of Argument, Ambition, Quality of Writing, and Presentation.

Group presentations are marked against a set criteria of: Relevance to Set Question, Depth of Analysis, Development of Argument, Logic of Argument, Ambition, Quality of Verbal Presentation, Visual Clarity of supporting slides.

## Feedback on Assessed Coursework

The studio-based nature of the course provides for on-going formative verbal feedback during one to one tutorials at the drawing board/computer and student presentation seminars. Students are alerted to the importance of this at the start of the course and encouraged to record the comments themselves as part of their reflective portfolios. Written summative feedback is provided at the end of a module. Students are encouraged to discuss with the relevant module tutor any issues they have with this.

## Module Assessment Methods

| Assessment Method Mapping | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Module Titles | Core (Y) | Presentation | Essay | Portfolio coursework | Portfolio coursework review | Presentation & reflective essay | Penultimate review | Thesis and opus | Illustrated report |
| Design Studio A | Y | | | 100% | | | | | |
| Critical Contexts | Y | 50% | 50% | | | | | | |
| Design Studio B with integrated Critical Technology | Y | | | | 75% | 25% | | | |
| Research Methods | Y | | | | | | | | 100% |
| Design Studio C | Y | | | | | | 20% | 80% | |

## Employability and Professional Context

<u>Digital Literacy</u>
This is developed from the outset of the course by utilising communication tools such as email and posting notices on CAGD, our virtual learning environment, as a principal means of communicating with students. Students use digital sources for research, both in-house (CAGD) and external. Some assessments are submitted on-line.

Digital Literacy is also developed through the use of subject-specific graphic applications, which increases the students' awareness of different file formats, the significance of image resolution and the importance of file sizes. If not already familiar with them, all students are introduced to Adobe Creative Suite, and various 3D Cad programmes such as Rhino and 3Dstudio Max, where the opportunity to parametric and scripting software such as Grasshopper is available The students are then encouraged to further develop these skills through self-directed learning. Students are expected to show competence in the use of appropriate software to explore and communicate the 3-dimensional nature of architectural design. At this level, students also have the opportunity to use desk-top publishing for their major thesis project.

Enterprise
At our University, 'enterprise' encompasses a broad range of skills. The MA Architecture has a large emphasis, especially in the final Design Studio C module, of creating an output suitable for academic and/or public consumption which disseminates the results of their research. This usually takes the form of an academic journal article, conference paper, or exhibition piece. This output, as a piece of work that stands alone as an original contribution to the field, equips the student with an understanding of academia. Should the student wish to continue their research at a higher level, perhaps as a PhD, then the research output provided them through the MA Architecture course will allow the student to apply, and hopefully secure, project funding to facilitate the research being carried out.

The skills embedded in the MA Architecture can also be associated with starting a business. Central to this is the concept of 'creative problem solving', an important aspect of the design process and which is included in the majority of modules that make up the course. In addition there are modules incorporating group work, providing opportunities for students to operate as entrepreneurs within their group.

Our two advanced Design Studio Modules provide all students with the opportunity to engage with local communities and potentially establish a close working relationship through which a project brief can be developed.  Working with external clients can also be incorporated in other modules when opportunities occur. 'Seizing an opportunity and developing it' (*Embedding enterprise as a graduate attribute at Leeds Beckett University*, Centre for Teaching & Learning, 2011) is manifested through allowing students to enter competitions when the opportunities arise, as part of the course.

Global outlook
Architecture is concerned with designing the built environment. The course provides opportunities for students to design anything from small-scale installations to city wide Masterplans, and everything in-between.

These projects occur in a wide variety of contexts and consequently require students to respond to the diversity of society's needs. The course incorporates international perspectives on urban design by examining overseas projects and the work of international designers. The concept of 'global relevance' (*Embedding a global outlook as a graduate attribute at Leeds Beckett University*, Centre for Teaching & Learning, 2011) is interpreted as including environmental responsibility, and students are required to consider how to

implement the three streams of sustainability (environmental, economic, social) in their designs.

Professional Output

The MA Architecture course uses the teaching of critical urban practice, community engagement, ecological urbanism, post-capitalism, critical technology, and the prototyping and testing of manufactured objects, to prepare graduates for a world dominated by social uncertainty and economic crisis. Due to its non-accredited nature, the course offers an opportunity to study architecture in its purest form, as a conceptual medium, without the need for realisation. Consequently students are not bound by the dilemma found between the acceleration of culture and the slowness of architecture, but rather can focus upon developing themselves as critically-informed designers with the ability to respond to the changing demands of the construction industry.

It is possible for the MA Architecture course to be approved as prior learning toward RIBA Part II. Therefore the course can act as a pathway into second yr entry on the MArch course at Leeds Beckett University. To be considered for entry onto the MArch at second yr level, students must have achieved a pass on the MA Architecture course. Eligible candidates are normally interviewed and are considered on an individual basis in accordance with established criteria and standards. At interview candidates will be required to present a portfolio of academic work which fulfils the ARB requirements for Part II that are solely met during the MArch first yr at Leeds Beckett University.

Academic Output

The MA Architecture provides clear evidence of a high standard of reflexive professional proficiency and critical skills. This is of increasing relevance in an extremely complex and competitive profession, in both architectural practice and academic career. MA students develop awareness, knowledge and criticality in architectural culture and current thought. The course promotes publication of work and presentation at conferences and symposia. Successful students will achieve enhanced status within the architectural profession, establishing the foundation for an academic career or for advanced level practice.

A Masters degree is a recommended pre-requisite for study at PhD level and hence the MA Architecture course prepares students for further post-graduate studies in architecture and architectural studies at doctoral level (MPhil/PhD) and equips them for the beginning of an academic career in architecture (teaching and research).

## Work-Related Activities

**N/A**

**Placement or Work-Related Activity Level:**

# N/A

**Placement or Work-Related Activity Length in Weeks:**

**N/A**

**Type of Placement or Work-Related Activity:**

**N/A**

## Reference Points used in course design and delivery

All our courses leading to Leeds Beckett University awards have been designed and approved in accordance with UK and European quality standards. Our courses utilise the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant subject benchmarks (where these are available) and professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements (for professionally accredited courses).

We review our courses annually and periodically, responding to student feedback and a range of information to enhance our courses. Our University is also subject to external review by the Quality Assurance Agency. Our latest report can be found on the QAA website at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports

We appoint External Examiners to verify that our University sets and maintains standards for awards which adhere to relevant national subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ (UK), ensure standards and student achievements are comparable with other Higher Education Institutions in the UK, with which they are familiar, and ensure that assessments measure achievement of course and module learning outcomes and reach the required standard. External Examiners may also provide feedback on areas of good practice or potential enhancement.

**Student Support Network**

If you have a question or a problem relating to your course, your Course Administrator is there to help you. Course Administrators works closely with academic staff and can make referrals to teaching staff or to specialist professional services as appropriate. They can give you a confirmation of attendance letter, and a transcript. You may also like to contact your Course Rep or the Students' Union Advice team for additional support with course-related questions.

If you have any questions about life at our University in general, call into or contact the Student Hub on either campus to speak to our Student Experience Team. This team, consisting of recent graduates and permanent staff, are available to support you throughout your time here.  They will make sure you have access to and are aware of the support, specialist services, and opportunities our University provides. There is a Student Hub on the ground floor of the Rose Bowl at City Campus and one in Campus Central at Headingley. You can also find the team in the Gateway in the Leslie Silver Building at City Campus.  The telephone number is 0113 812 3000, and the e-mail address is StudentHub@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

Within MyBeckett you will see two tabs (Support and Opportunities) where you can find online information and resources for yourselves.  The Support tab gives you access to details of services available to give you academic and personal support.  These include Library Services, the Students' Union, Money advice, Disability advice and support, Wellbeing, International Student Services and Accommodation. There is also an A-Z of Support Services, and access to online appointments/ registration.

The Opportunities tab is the place to explore the options you have for jobs, work placements, volunteering, and a wide range of other opportunities.  For example, you can find out here how to get help with your CV, prepare for an interview, get a part-time job or voluntary role, take part in an international project, or join societies closer to home.

## Record of Enhancement

| No. | Detail of modification<br>(Provide a brief description of the modification and where the Course Specification has been updated) | Date Effective<br>(Indicate the academic year of entry and course level(s) to which the modification will apply) |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Example**<br>Assessment changed from examination to presentation in Module X, see section entitled Module Assessment Methods. | Level 5 from September 2018-19 entry |