



Think
architecture

Did you know...

‘The art of architecture can be practised by people with a wide range of skills – if I had to have maths or physics I wouldn’t (and probably couldn’t!) have become an architect.’

Sir Terry Farrell



Welsh School of Architecture

‘Studying architecture gives you the opportunity to learn multiple skills – including crafting, drawing, photography, graphics and 3D modelling. Architecture also teaches you to be much more investigative as you are constantly looking for inspiration for your work.’

Pascal Bronner



London Metropolitan University

‘The best thing about an architectural education is the breadth of skills and depth of thought that is developed and which will always be with you.’

Tim O’Callaghan

‘I’m glad I’m completing my degree at this point in my life. I’m getting so much more out of the process now as I understand where the ideas come from and I have a massive drive to succeed.’

Dave Wilson

‘Architecture is a fascinating, wonderful, tough profession. If you want to do it, go for it. The boundaries between life and architecture are very fine – that’s what I love about it.’

Amanda Levete



Welsh School of Architecture

‘A career in architecture is challenging but rewarding in many ways; it is a career that allows you to express your creativity and to shape the world in which we live.’

Sherief El-Salamani

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A career in architecture

Architecture is a phenomenon, mirroring the people it serves. Architects and the clients they work with constantly redefine the way our buildings and civic spaces will be; that is an amazing challenge. It is also right to see architecture as a social art, a cultural idea, and a profession catalysed by new technologies, innovation, and a strong sense of conviction. So if you want to add to this list of possibilities, architecture could well be the white knuckle ride your life and career needs.

Be aware that a career in architecture will probably combine inspiration, perspiration, frustration, and elation in equal amounts. But if you have a restless nature, worry about the city and sustainability, are obsessed with beauty in all things, need to draw to finish your sentences effectively, and don't mind meeting some of the most interesting and maddening people on the planet you are in the right place.

Architecture is an extraordinary thing – it can improve people's lives. It appears every society has decided we need it, and that we measure our civilisations by it. All this means that you are about to enter one of the biggest and most passionate debates humanity can get involved in; just look out of your window for confirmation.

Don't sit on the fence. Right here, right now is where you can make a difference, shaping the future with architecture.

David Gloster
Director of Education
Royal Institute of British Architects

On the tracing paper:

Conception to Completion

The Bandstand, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea
Niall McLaughlin Architects / 2001

The design process started with a piece of paper made into a simple shape. It was later given a waved profile to break up the sound waves. The materials chosen were a combination of plywood and fibreglass that could be assembled in the builder's workshop. Although the canopy is of relatively traditional construction, the detail design used advanced computer modelling techniques. The final shape is a practical shelter for bands.



Allianz Arena, Munich, Herzog & de Meuron © Robert Hissl



Westminster Academy, London, AHMM © Tim Soar & AHMM / 2008 RIBA Award Winner



The Tree House, London, Constructive Individuals © Laura Broderick



Dance City, Newcastle upon Tyne, Malcolm Fraser Architects © Morley von Sternberg / 2007 RIBA Award Winner



TODS Omotesando Building, Tokyo, Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects © Nacasa & Partners Inc



Maggie's Centre, Kirkcaldy, Zaha Hadid Architects © Nathaniel Lee

Studying architecture

Introduction

Architectural studies differ from many other subjects and courses. Most of your studies will be based in the studio for design work, tutorials and 'crits' (critiques). The crit, a common term in art and design education, is where you present your design project work to tutors (and other students) who provide feedback. You will also attend lectures and computer aided design tutorials, have essays to write, site visits to go on and visits to buildings and places of interest.

Some schools provide opportunities for hands-on building projects; others offer specialist areas of study or have developed strengths in particular disciplines, for example: sustainability, town planning, technology, or management. Skills in problem solving and team working are also developed through project work.

The approach to architectural education differs between schools so you should thoroughly research the available courses to see what suits you and your interests, as well as your qualifications, before applying. Try to attend the open days or the degree shows (student exhibitions) of the universities you are interested in. Open days are a great time to ask current students and tutors lots of questions about the course. The degree shows allow you to examine the work of graduating students and usually take place from late May to early July. They will give you an excellent idea of the focus and orientation of work in a particular school.

The typical route

The typical route to qualifying as an architect in the United Kingdom is a combination of academic studies at a university and practical experience. It involves training for five years at university and a minimum of two years experience before final qualification. This includes three key stages of study on recognised courses validated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the first stage being a three year undergraduate degree which will provide students with a graduate qualification even if they do not continue with architecture as a profession. Studying on recognised courses is the most straightforward route to becoming a fully qualified architect.

The reason why the path to becoming an architect is so long is that architecture is a wide ranging discipline based on a large body of design, technical, and professional knowledge, in which students develop a high level of skill. This prepares students to make sound professional judgements in difficult, often pressurised situations. It is a long course because turning knowledge into ability, through successive design projects over the duration of the course is a lengthy – and exciting – process.

The diagram overleaf illustrates this study process.

Other routes

Architecture is an evolving subject and various flexible pathways to qualification are in development, including apprenticeships, where students will be able to train on the job and study part-time at university. Whilst there are no distance learning courses available in UK schools of architecture, there are options for those who are unable to study fulltime, or have previously gained other related qualifications and work experience.

A number of schools offer part-time validated courses so students can train in architecture while earning a salary, though it will take longer to qualify via this route. RIBA Studio offers a route to qualification for those working in architectural practices who are unable to attend courses in schools of architecture.

Some schools offer entry with advanced standing to applicants with related qualifications or may give some exemptions from parts of their course in recognition of related subjects already studied. This is strictly at the discretion of the school of architecture concerned.

Even if you don't have the usual admissions requirements some schools are happy to judge a mature student on other grounds, especially their portfolio. Other universities and higher education colleges run foundation courses and access courses to enable you to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

The RIBA recognises many schools of architecture overseas. However, if you have studied or qualified as an architect outside the UK (even at an RIBA recognised school), your qualifications will need to be assessed for equivalence to those in the UK by the Architects Registration Board (ARB). The RIBA recognises ARB recommendations at this stage. You will then have to undertake a Part 3 qualification once you have met the required criteria.

Useful links

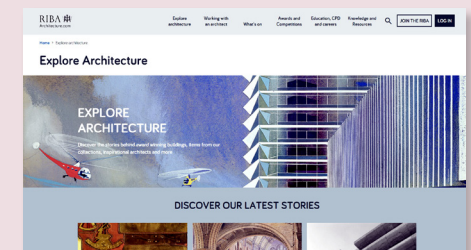
A pdf list of RIBA validated courses, and information on RIBA Studio can be downloaded from www.architecture.com

Architects Registration Board (ARB)
www.arb.org.uk

RIBA President's Medals Student Awards
www.presidentsmedals.com

Professional Education and Development Resource (PEDR)
www.pedr.co.uk

RIBA Appointments
www.ribaappointments.com



The route to qualification

Part 1

University undergraduate degree e.g. BA or BSc Three years full-time / develop a broad range of skills and architectural understanding

You are eligible for free RIBA Student Membership from your first year of study

Some UK architecture courses run exchange programmes with universities abroad for up to a year of study (e.g. Erasmus programme). Some part 1 graduates gain further qualifications in specialist related fields such as planning, urban design, or conservation.

Other part 1 graduates move on to work in something different with the skills they have developed at this level.



Stage 1

Practical Experience

Paid practical experience – typically one year in duration

Students record their experience on the PEDR website, monitored by a Professional Studies Advisor (PSA) from their University and an employment mentor from their practice.

The RIBA provides model contracts for students and employers on the PEDR website, and encourages students to gain experience either under the supervision of an architect, or another qualified construction industry professional at this stage.

Some students choose to work for longer than one year – to save money or gain a wider range of professional experience. Other students take time out to work in the wider construction industry; to work overseas; to volunteer; or to travel.



Part 2

University degree – varies from school to school e.g. BArch, Diploma, MArch Two years full-time / enhanced architectural knowledge and project complexity

Students are still regarded as undergraduate students in the architectural education process but should seek clarification on fee status at individual schools.

Students may choose to return to the school where they completed part 1, or apply to study for part 2 at another school.

There will be opportunities for students to carry out specialist study and research, possibly abroad.



Stage 2

Practical Experience

Paid practical experience – 24 months experience in total is required to sit the part 3 examination, of which 12 months minimum should be undertaken in the EEA, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, under the direct supervision of an architect.

At this stage, graduates will be given more responsibility on projects and begin studying aspects of practice, management and law on a part 3 programme.

RIBA Associate membership offers a range of services and benefits appropriate to the needs of graduates at this stage of their career.

The RIBA encourages post-part 2 graduates to contact their RIBA regional office and get involved with various programmes.

Others may join, or wish to establish, a young practitioners panel or similar network in their local area.

Part 3

The final qualifying examination in professional practice and management is taken at an RIBA validated course provider

Candidates will be assessed on the following elements:

- 24 months of practical experience recorded on the PEDR website
- Professional C.V and career evaluation
- Case study
- Written examination
- Final oral examination



Architect

Having gained the parts 1, 2 & 3 qualifications you can register as an architect with the Architects Registration Board (ARB); the title architect is protected by law so that the public can always be sure that they are dealing with a properly qualified architect.

At this point you are eligible to become a Chartered Member of the RIBA. This gives you access to a wide range of services and benefits, and entitles you to become part of, and an influence on, a national and international network of architects.

Applying for architecture

Entry Requirements

Many subjects studied at school and college are relevant to architecture giving you the flexibility to choose the subjects you are strongest in and enjoy. Ideally you should have gained a broad secondary education encompassing a mixture of arts and sciences. Although it is not always necessary to study art, you should enjoy drawing freehand and have an interest in design and making 3D work: most schools will require you to present a portfolio at interview.

Schools of architecture will express their offer in terms of the UCAS tariffs, but typically you will need at least two subjects at A level or one A and two AS levels. In addition you must generally have passed at least five GCSEs which normally include English Language and Mathematics.

Many schools of architecture also recognise other further education qualifications. If you are a mature student it is worth remembering that even if you don't possess the usual admissions requirements most schools are happy to assess a mature student on other grounds, especially your portfolio.

The RIBA currently validates, and the ARB prescribes, courses at approximately 50 schools of architecture in the UK. The entry requirements and the format of the courses vary from school to school. You are advised to contact individual schools of architecture to ascertain their specific entry requirements, as well as their course structure. That way you will be able to find out which schools are most suitable for you to apply to, and which schools have the greatest appeal.

Once you have applied, you may or may not be invited for interview. Many schools of architecture ask to see a portfolio of work. However, some schools make conditional offers on the basis of the information you include on your UCAS form.

This is most likely to be the case when your A level subjects are seen to be particularly relevant. In the absence of an interview, an open day is an opportunity for you to find out about the school's approach to architectural education before you make your final decision.

Preparing for interview

At interview university tutors will ask questions and discuss your portfolio with you. This is to help them determine your skills and interests. It is therefore important to have researched the world of architecture and to feel confident and happy talking about the work in your portfolio. Some sample questions might be:

- Why do you want to study architecture?
- Is there a particular architect or specific building that you admire?
- Why do you want to study at this school?



University of Plymouth

Paying for your course

Architecture is a long course of study. While it is worth remembering that, due to the format of architectural education, you could be working and earning a salary for at least two of the seven years before you complete your qualifications, the reality is that it is a long commitment and requires a considerable investment. Many students will accumulate significant student debt.

On top of tuition fees and living costs you will also have to budget annually for printing, materials, travel for site visits and field trips. The costs of these additional materials and activities can vary considerably from school to school, so it is worth asking current students and staff at the schools you are considering, so that you can factor this into your budget.

UK students may be entitled to non-repayable grants from their local authority to meet the maintenance costs and tuition fees for the full 5 years of recognised academic study. The financial support you receive will depend on your family's financial circumstances. You must apply for all 5 years when making your initial application.

UK students can also apply for full or partial loans to cover the cost of their tuition fees and maintenance costs. These loans accrue interest and the repayments are contingent on your future income. Again, you should declare your intentions to study for 5 years when making your application. This ensures that you are classified as a continuing undergraduate student even after taking a year (or up to 3 years) between your parts 1 and 2. You may also be eligible for support whilst working in practice between parts 1 and 2, depending on how your course is classified. Your university should be able to provide you with information about this.

Some universities operate bursary schemes for their students. You should therefore research the options available at universities you intend to apply to. Additionally, some architectural practices, especially larger ones, may sponsor students of architecture – for example, contributing to the part 2 course fees of a student who has worked for the practice between parts 1 and 2. Sponsorship may be tied in to an employment agreement with that practice on graduation. The RIBA also offers bursaries for architecture students, full details of which are on the education pages of the RIBA's website.

For information on funding and avenues to explore visit:

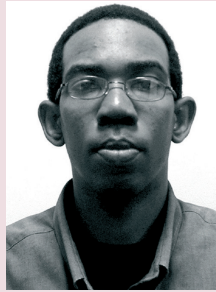
The funding section of the RIBA's Education pages
www.architecture.com

Universities and Colleges Admission Service
wwwucas.com

The Student Loans Company
wwwslc.co.uk

Government Services
www.gov.uk/education

The portfolio



Thomas Philip

Student

In my opinion, architecture is an assortment of life's experiences and observations, that are presented to the world, to be engaged with, to add a good experience to life, and to inspire better living.



Kumiko Hirayama

Part 1 Graduate

I have wanted to be an architect since I was five! It is a challenging and satisfying subject, though I did change my career pathway once as I thought that it was not achievable. However, nothing is impossible and I am now very glad to have the opportunity to study architecture.



Angela Hopcraft

Part 2 Graduate

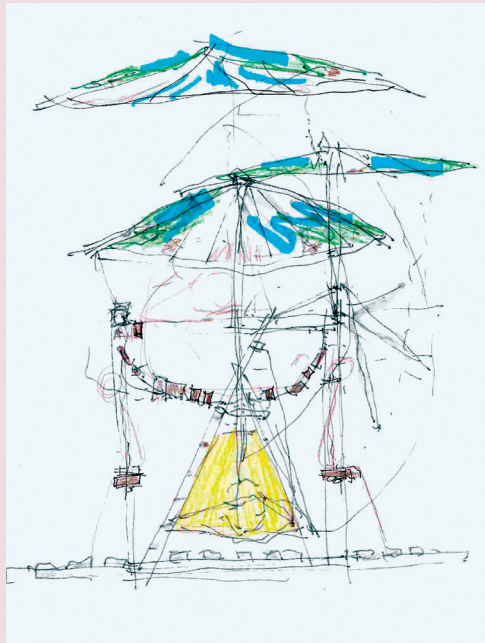
An appetite for the arts and a deep interest in the perception of space were my initial reasons for embarking on a career in architecture. What I now realise and relish is that I have begun a lifelong journey, exploring, experimenting, and being creative in an ever-evolving design field.

If invited for interview at university you will be expected to present a portfolio of your work, and for many schools this is an important factor in offering you a place on an architecture course.

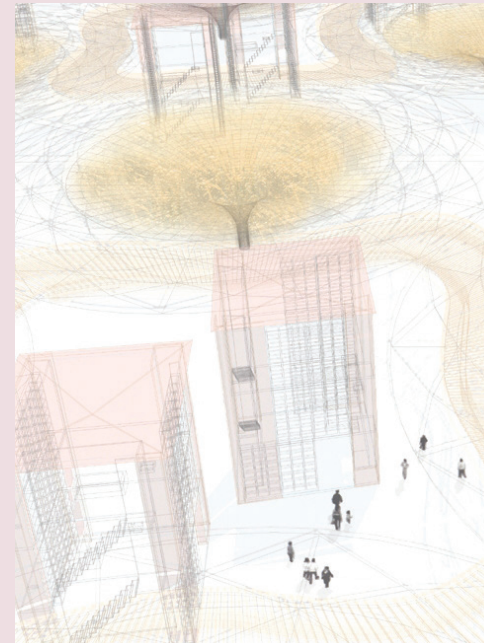
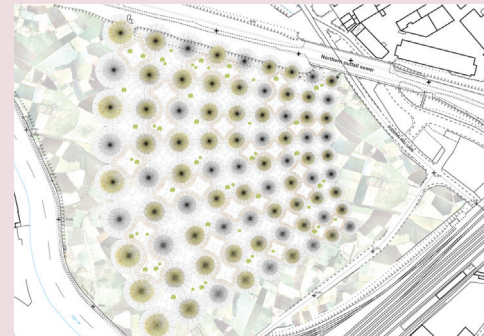
The portfolio is a tool used throughout a career in architecture, and at entry level stage should demonstrate a broad mixture of your work, especially drawings, although it can include anything you think is relevant such as photographs, life drawings, paintings, models or collages.

Drawing is the essential skill of architecture, and you will be taught at university how to master necessary drafting and CAD skills, so you do not need to learn these beforehand. Schools are not looking in your portfolio for highly skilled architectural work, but for evidence that you have the potential to benefit from an architectural education.

The images are from various student portfolios and illustrate the type of work produced at various stages of study.



Images © Thomas Philip



Images © Kumiko Hirayama



Images © Angela Hopcraft

Find out more

To learn more about careers in the built environment and to read case studies

Construction Industry Training Board
www.citb.co.uk

Construction Industry Council
www.cic.org.uk

Homes and Communities Agency
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency

For information on equal opportunities in architecture

Architects for Change (AfC) is an advisory group of professionals who work with the RIBA to develop policies and activities aimed at promoting diversity and equal opportunities in architecture.
www.architecture.com

SKILL: The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities produces a guide entitled 'Into Architecture' which is an informative publication looking at the various options for people with disabilities considering a career in architecture and related areas www.skill.org.uk

To discover more about architecture

Observe and record what you see – places you use every day and new places you visit.

Explore the RIBA website to view a selection of the RIBA architectural collections, award-winning projects and links to useful information
www.architecture.com

Visit museums and galleries and, if you can, visit the V&A and RIBA Architecture Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, or search the online collection www.ribapix.com

Read architecture publications in your library and search for them on-line at RIBA Bookshops website www.ribabookshops.com

Watch architecture and design films on TV and online, and follow RIBA Education on YouTube.

To gain work experience

Write to architects in your local area. Many architects will take school or college students for one or two weeks' work experience to help in career and university course decisions.

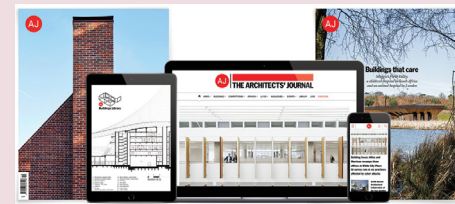
If you look in the RIBA Directory of Practices you will find names and addresses of practices, plus a short description of the kind of work they do
www.architecture.com/working-with-an-architect

There is no centralised list held by the RIBA of architects who may be able to offer work experience, so you need to approach practices directly. Your RIBA regional office may be able to advise you www.architecture.com/my-local-riba

When you approach an architectural practice, try to make your letter stand out – you could include a drawing or photograph which shows your interest in architecture. Remember that architects are very busy so it is worth giving them plenty of notice and following up a letter with a phone call. Ask your careers teacher to help you prepare a letter.



The University of Sheffield



FAQs

What are the entry requirements?

Schools of architecture will typically express their offer in terms of the UCAS tariffs, and the offers vary between schools. It is therefore necessary to check requirements with individual schools. Many schools of architecture consider further education qualifications other than A-levels, and assess mature students on grounds other than formal academic experience.

Royal College of Art (© Nick Grace)



Do I need to have a qualification in art?

Whilst it is not always essential to take art as an examination (though some schools do express a preference for Art A-level), most schools will want to see a portfolio of visual work – drawings, sketches, photography painting, or collage. Some universities and colleges run summer courses to help you build up a portfolio.

Edinburgh College of Art



What salary can I expect? Will I be able to get a job?

Salaries can vary enormously depending on the type, size and geographical location of the practice. Economic fluctuations can make this doubly difficult as architecture, and the employment of architects, depend very much on the building industry, which in turn is reliant on the business and development economy. The RIBA Appointments website gives an indication of average salaries for the different regions of the UK.



Do I need to be good at maths?

If you don't feel confident in your mathematical ability or grades, don't be put off applying to architecture. You will need GCSE Mathematics, however a few schools may ask for Maths or Science at A level. Do check the entry requirements of individual schools.



University of Plymouth

Why is the course so long?

Architecture is a wide ranging discipline based upon a large body of design, technical, cultural, and professional knowledge, in which students develop a high level of skill. Learning to master the architectural process, through successive projects, is a lengthy process.

Kent School of Architecture



University of Sheffield



Which are the best schools of architecture?

The RIBA does not rank schools or issue a list of 'best schools'. The RIBA revalidates recognised courses at schools of architecture every 5 years. Therefore, if a course appears on the RIBA and ARB list, it has met the UK required standards. The best way to find out if a course will suit you is to read the school's prospectus and website carefully, ask questions about course content and structure, and visit the school on an open day or at the end of year degree show. That way you can find out what sort of work the school produces and get a sense of the place you may choose to study in.

Contact

We hope you have found this information booklet useful. If you have any specific queries then please contact the Education Department at:

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www.architecture.com

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RIBA 
Architecture.com

A day in the life of an architectural practice.



Tracing paper



© Julian Cowie Architects

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