Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from The University of Sheffield

1	**Programme Title**	Architectural Design
2	**Programme Code**	ARCT125
3	**JACS Code**	Not applicable
4	**Level of Study**	Postgraduate
5a	**Final Qualification**	Master of Arts (MA)
5b	**QAA FHEQ Level**	Masters (M)
6a	**Intermediate Qualification(s)**	Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate
6b	**QAA FHEQ Level**	Masters, (M)
7	**Teaching Institution** (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	**Faculty**	Social Sciences
9	**Department**	School of Architecture
10	**Other Departments involved in teaching the programme**	Not applicable
11	**Mode(s) of Attendance**	Full-time
12	**Duration of the Programme**	1 year
13	**Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body**	Not applicable
14	**Date of production/revision**	27 July 2017, March 2024

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The School of Architecture

The School of Architecture, established in 1907, is one of the top architecture schools in the UK and one of the leading schools of architecture in Europe. The School of Architecture and the Departments of Landscape Architecture, Urban Studies and Planning have come 3rd nationally in the REF 2021 in terms of the quality of their research. 95 per cent of their research and impact is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent and they are rated top for the quality of their research environment nationally. Besides its RIBA validated Part I and Part II courses, the School of Architecture currently runs three taught master courses and is one of the countries' leading centres for postgraduate architectural research.

Master in Architectural Design

The Master in Architectural Design programme takes advantage of the School's existing national and international reputation in architectural design. The new programme specifically builds on the department's acclaimed research and teaching expertise in the field of design, and extends the work already done in the MArch programme, with its emphasis on the social and environmental responsibility of the architect.

The design studio is central to the MA in Architectural Design programme at Sheffield, acting as a laboratory for the testing of creative and critical ideas whilst at the same time developing communication and representation skills.

Distinctive features of the Master in Architectural Design include:

- emphasis on design work (120 of 180 credits).

- lectures and design teaching are delivered by people at the forefront of their discipline.

- integration of social, economic, political and cultural issues at every point of the design process.

- support through existing research groups at the School of Architecture.

- innovative combination of studio work, lectures and communication skills develops the intellectual
requirements of a University education, as well as preparing students for future careers in Architectural design.

16. Programme aims

Programmes offered by the Faculty of Social Science and the School of Architecture have the following general aims consonant with the Mission Statement of the University of Sheffield:

1. to provide high quality teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels that is informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of its staff in order to provide a stimulating culture of learning and enthusiasm for the subject.

2. to educate able and well-motivated students from a wide range of backgrounds.

3. to support students in developing intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.

4. progressively to develop competencies in a wide range of transferable and employment skills.

5. to instil in students a commitment to self-improvement and the development of life skills.

6. to emphasise informed applicant choice and equal opportunities in the admissions process.

7. to provide a supportive environment for students and involve them in the ongoing development of the programme.

8. to enable students to maximise their potential in all aspects of the programme.

More specifically the MA in Architectural Design has the following additional aims:

9. to develop an ability to produce coherent and well resolved architectural designs.

10. to develop the ability to integrate knowledge of social, cultural, political, environmental and economic issues into a design project.

11. to develop an understanding of the influence of historic and contemporary design methodologies and issues.

12. to develop an understanding of the relationship of architectural design to other disciplines and fields of practice including the professional context of architectural design.

13. to develop the ability to use an appropriate range of visual, verbal and written communication methods and the ability to communicate effectively to diverse audiences.

14. to develop students' critical skills in understanding the different contexts and environments including the political and economic environments.

15. to instil an appreciation of the diversity of cultures and values in society and how designers may respond to these.

16. to provide students with research skills, the ability to analyse and synthesise knowledge and an understanding of the role of research.

17. to develop through specialised studies, a deeper knowledge of a selected aspect or aspects of architectural design.

18. to develop a commitment to self-learning and the development of life skills and foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:	
Candidates for MA and PGDip will have developed:	
K1	an understanding of conceptual ideas, research paradigms, methods and approaches within histories and theories of architectural design, the history of ideas, and the related disciplines of architecture, landscape studies, planning, and cultural studies and its application in critical debate.
K2	an understanding of the nature of research and its relationship with design and theory.
K3	an understanding of briefs and critical appraisal techniques, to ensure that the design response is appropriate to the site and the physical and social context, and for reasons such as sustainability and budget.
K4	an understanding of social, economic, political and cultural issues relevant to their project along with an understanding of how these are part of current and emerging trends within architectural design.

K5	an understanding of current environmental design issues and their impact on world resources and human well-being.
K6	knowledge of a wide range of architectural strategies and theoretical approaches.
In addition candidates for MA will have developed:	
K7	The ability to integrate the above areas of knowledge and understanding in a developed design-based thesis.

Skills and other attributes:	
Candidates for MA and PGDip will have developed:	
S1	the ability to produce and demonstrate coherent and well resolved architectural designs that integrate knowledge of: the social, political, economic, environmental and professional context that influences architecture.
S2	the ability to demonstrate that they can analyse and appraise design options, and draw conclusions which display methodological and theoretical rigour.
S3	the ability to demonstrate knowledge of different approaches in architectural design, both historical and contemporary.
S4	the ability to use architectural representations having critically appraised the most appropriate techniques available.
S5	the ability to work as part of a team.
S6	the ability to independently define, and critically appraise, their ideas in relation to a design and to the work of others.
S7	the ability to demonstrate the synthesis of design thinking.
S8	the ability to explain architectural design proposals and the related social, political, economic and professional context of the project, both in written and oral form.
S9	the ability to express their critical position in a coherent written form following academic standards.
In addition candidates for MA will have developed:	
S10	the ability to appraise and form considered judgements and develop a research proposal, a research strategy, theoretical programme and a project such as a dissertation, independently defining and critically appraising their ideas in relation to architectural design approaches.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

For candidates of MA and PGDip:
The programme offers a variety of different teaching modes including studio-based design work with individual and group tutorials; block seminars and workshops; lecture modules; as well as 'Live Projects' involving real clients and a real community project.

Studio-based design work forms the core of the Masters programme, and provides for approximately half the programme. Students will work here on design projects proposed by the tutor as well as on projects that have been initiated by the students themselves. Studio teaching is structured through individual and group tutorials as well as interim and final project presentations and reviews. The design studio is promoted as a place of integration of skills and knowledge. The teaching and learning methods combine to develop design understanding and research, analytical and communication skills of the students in order to meet the appropriate objectives listed in **K1-6** and **S1-11** above.

Field work relates directly to the studio-based design work and aims at developing the students' skills in directly engaging with relevant stakeholders and local communities, experiment with various forms of traditional and creative site analysis, as well as comparative research. Field work is used to gain both knowledge and awareness as well as to develop and test relevant skills (**K1-6** and **S1-11**).

Lectures will deliver the core and contextual knowledge required for the course provided as part of 'Design Methodologies'.

Seminars in the 'Design Methodologies' unit are based on critical readings of key texts in order to develop the students' own approach to architectural design and an analytical understanding of architectural design and practice (**K1-6** and **S1-3**, **6-10**). Seminars in the 'Design Project' units are student led and allow students to present research work undertaken in the design studio (**K1-9**, **S1-10**).

Workshops are used to develop innovative approaches to design based on research of design methodologies and/or alternative modes of practice. These are conducted in groups to encourage team working and role-playing. Workshops are part of the unit ''Design Methodologies' and are also used in the studio-based design projects ('Design Project 1+2' units). They are often combined with lectures and/or seminars. They are particularly used to develop skills listed under **S1-8.**

Individual tutorials as well as **group work** are available to support each student in the development of her/his individual direction enabling them to find the most appropriate subjects for their unit assessments and direction of the final project (**S1-10**). Aside from the design studio work, small group and individual tutorials are also used to support the preparation for written assessments, and reports **(S2, S10).** Students are allocated to individual tutors, according to their areas of specialist knowledge and expertise.

Independent study is essential to the successful completion of the programme. Independent study is important to both the work undertaken in the design studio and in the supporting modules; in the former it has a central role in the design process, where a student's own design proposals develop around issues identified in small group and individual tutorials; in the latter, it is generally geared towards the assimilation and further clarification of material gleaned from lectures, seminars and workshops, the preparation for assessments, and the broader development of knowledge of the field of study. Supervised independent study is central to the researching and writing of the thesis design project (**K1-6**, **S1-10**).

Additionally for candidates of MA:
Research and Dissertation is part of the unit 'Thesis Design Project'. The student will develop a research proposal and a research strategy that supports the theoretical approach of the final design project. Research and design strategy will be documented in the dissertation. (**S1-10**).

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

The programme uses a wide variety of assessment methods to enable different skills and knowledge to be developed and to be assessed. Assessment required by the different modules on the MA in Architectural Design is organised within a framework that allows skills and knowledge to be developed by students. Students are also encouraged to develop skills in time management and self-motivation outside formal assessment mechanisms.

Studio-based design work and the units 'Design Project 1', 'Design Project 2', and 'Architectural Design Thesis Project' make up 2/3 of the total credits taken (120 credits). The learning and assessment processes mirror one another, and take place and develop concurrently. Formative assessment occurs through conversations with other students and tutors in tutorials, workshops and reviews, where judgments concerning quality are generally reached through dialogue and negotiation. Final assessment will generally occur through the submission of **coursework**, usually in the form of a **portfolio** in the case of studio and a **dissertation document** in the case of the thesis design project. This will, in particular, address the design approach (**K1-6**, **S1-10**), but students are also expected to demonstrate awareness of cultural, theoretical, historical, contextual aspects in their design. (**K1-6, S1-3, 6- 8**).

The studio-based course also directly assesses transferable skills such as group working (**S5**), the ability to express these skills being inherent in the submission of a successful portfolio of work. Much of the preparatory work in the design studio involves either independent study or group work, and without this the later work would not show signs of the required development. The design portfolio is often seen as an exemplar of the expression of transferable skills, in as much as it necessarily integrates a diverse set of skills and broad range of knowledge into a single, but complex, document.

Other units will be assessed through:

essay writing where part of the assignment will be used to test understanding and knowledge of design methodologies. Particular attention will be paid to ensure that students make a critical interpretation of various approaches, reasons and implications of design approaches. This form of assessment will also be used to test subject knowledge, communication skills, increasing autonomy in student learning, and the development of transferable skills, as well as demonstrating evidence of, knowledge of, and a critical attitude towards, the components covered in the programme objectives. Essays also help to develop the students' ability to communicate clearly through fluent writing and the construction of well-developed arguments.

project reports that will be used to test the critical self-appraisal of a student's experience of their design as well as the student's skills in applying knowledge to particular situations and contexts. They are particularly important in assessing skills in analysis, formulation of responses and making decisions, and the ability to communicate findings and recommendations in a clear manner **(S6-S10)**. They also provide a means of checking students' ability to work as teams as well as independently **(S5, S 6-S9).**

oral presentation (design reviews) is seen as an important part of the assessment strategy. Students are required to present project findings and recommendations to peers, outside professionals and members of staff, and such presentation is assessed. Oral presentation particularly allows the assessment of the ability to communicate clearly and effectively **(S6-10)**. Oral presentation will be used throughout the programme as a means of students presenting their work and reporting back to the year or module group. Oral presentation is a particularly important skill for urban designers and students are expected to develop their abilities in this throughout the programme.

visual presentation (design reviews) that will be used as a means of assessment to test the ability of students to communicate the results of analysis, research and make recommendations in a visual form that will include web-based design, graphic skills, film and video work, model making skills **(S4)**. This is an important skill for designers to acquire that will complement their verbal communication abilities.

The **dissertation** as part of the culmination of the programme. The dissertation is intended to demonstrate particular understandings and skills **(K1-2, K7, S2, S3, S9)** and the ability to identify research problems and formulate and carry out a programme of research **(S10)** that informs and supports that final design project.

*Reviews and assessments draw on the innovative, student-led modes that have been already developed and implemented by the School of Architecture ('Swap Review', 'Role Play', 'Project Surgery', 'Peer Review', 'Interview' or 'Exhibition Review' etc).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

External Reference Points

The programme addresses a growing national and international need for professionals that are knowledgeable and skilled in design.

The following **external** documents have been used. These cover the more generic requirements for architecture courses at this level. Although the one-year course is not validated it is based in part on the existing MArch programme and runs alongside it for the major part of the year.

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) Prescription of Qualifications: ARB Criteria (2002). (http://www.arb.org.uk/education/arb-criteria/contents.shtml)

The relevant requirements of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), in particular the qualification descriptors contained in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England Wales and Northern Ireland – January 2001; and the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement.

These documents in turn draw on the requirements of the European Commission Architecture Directive for Professional Education. (http://www.riba.org/go/RIBA/Also/Education_2423.html)

In preparation to the new programme a number of external experts in the field of design were consulted on the direction and relevance of the programme.

Internal Reference Points
The internal reference points generally reflect on the distinctive nature of the programme in terms of research led teaching, student self-development, integration of all aspects of the programme, and the aspiration for a rigorous knowledge base. They also inform the emphasis on social and environmental aspects within the programme.

The following documents and positions have been used to do this:

Subject Benchmark Statements
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2008)
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx

University Vision and Strategic Plan
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision

The University strategy statement on Postgraduate taught provision.

The Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy of the School of Architecture.

The programme follows the intellectual ethos of the School of Architecture, building strongly on social and environmental responsibilities in relation to the design and production of the built environment.

The programme complements the two other taught Postgraduate programmes at the department: the MA in Urban Design, and MSc is Sustainable Architecture Studies. It enhances the strong student body and post-graduate culture at the school.

The programme builds on the School's acclaimed research and teaching expertise and extends the work already done in the MArch programme.

20. Programme structure and regulations

Programme Units
Core to the programme is the work in the design studio ('Design Project 1' and 'Design Project 2') which are taught in the autumn and spring semesters respectively; and 'Architectural Design Thesis Project' taught over the full academic year including the summer. In addition to studio there are core modules that directly support and enrich the studio curriculum: 'Environment and Technology in Design' and 'Reflections on Architectural Design'.

In these modules students are confronted with different design issues and approaches, alongside their development in studio of design projects.

The design units are not stand-alone units but build on and integrate the knowledge and skills gained in the other core units of the programme. The option modules offer the student the opportunity to put a particular personal emphasis on the programme in order to match their individual interests or future practice possibilities. The option modules are taken in the autumn or spring semester.

The programme provides a very **coherent course of study**. **Student choice** is provided for in a variety of ways:

1.   within core modules, a significant amount of responsibility is taken by students in identifying and developing their own particular area of interest and specialism, as well as in relating these choices to their studio design projects.

2.   students take an 'Option Module' worth 15 credits; this can be selected from appropriate modules offered in the School and by other departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

3.   students are given considerable choice in the range of live projects and individual studios that form studio based courses. Within these choices there is the freedom to develop their own brief. The full MA cohort will gain an awareness of differing approaches to design as they will be able to select different studios.

Structure /Timetable
Formal teaching is structured with two core teaching days per week. Full-time students are expected to conduct independent study on the other three days and are encouraged to use studio provision in order to benefit from exchange with their peers.

Qualifications and Credits
The Programme is a Postgraduate Masters Course with **180 Credits** in total of which all have to be taken at Level M. The Masters course runs over one full academic year with the taught units predominantly in the autumn and spring semester and a continuation over the summer in which the student works on his or her thesis design project. The Programme also offers the option of a Postgraduate Diploma with **120 Credits** and a Postgraduate Certificate with **60 credits;** all of the credits of which have to be taken at Level M. Students taking the Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate route take their credits from modules offered in the autumn and/or spring semester.

The Programme is design focused which is reflected in the weighing of the credits with, at Master Level, 120 Credits given for design work (including the live projects and thesis design project) and 60 credits given for the supporting units (60/60 respectively for the PGDip level).

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/regs

21. Student development over the course of study

As a one year postgraduate programme, it is assumed that students will enter the programme with an already established set of skills. The main development within the programme is in the sequence of design projects which gradually increase in complexity and scale. The majority of submissions in the other subject areas relate also to the final design project carried out by each student. These are intended to reinforce the ability to successfully bring together a diverse range of complex issues into an original coherent and comprehensive architectural project. The final thesis project thus integrates the knowledge developed in the non-studio based courses. By the time they have completed the course students should be able to show methodological and theoretical rigour in the way that they generate, test, analyse and critically evaluate options, and draw conclusions in the full range of their work.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

- The entry requirement to the programme is an undergraduate honours degree (2.1 or above) or other equivalent qualification related to design in the built environment including architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning. Applicants also have to present a portfolio.

- Students with a degree from non-design based courses but with substantial design experience can still be considered. Additionally to a portfolio that substantiates the candidate's design abilities, students have to go through an interview process.
- Non-English speaking students are required to have IELTS, or equivalent, with a result of no less than 6.5, with no component below 6.0.

23. Additional information

For further information about the School of Architecture go to http://www.shef.ac.uk/architecture/

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.