The University Of Sheffield.

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**	Architecture
2	**Programme Code**	ARCU103
3	**JACS Code**	K100
4	**Level of Study**	Undergraduate
5a	**Final Qualification**	Bachelor of Arts
5b	**QAA FHEQ Level**	Honours
6	**Intermediate Qualification**	None
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**	None
11	**Mode of Attendance**	Full-time
12	**Duration of the Programme**	3 years
13	**Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body**	ARB (Architects Registration Board) RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects)
14	**Date of production/revision**	September 2012, March 2023, August 2023, March 2024

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Architecture is often defined as the marriage of the arts and sciences. Whilst it is true that architecture draws on creativity and ideas on the one hand, and rigorous analytical techniques on the other, the subject of architecture significantly differs from the arts and sciences. The distinct character is given through the act of designing spaces; this allows the designer to express and explore ideas, using both creativity and analysis. Architecture brings together conceptual, contextual, ethical and material considerations in the realisation of space or form. The design studio is thus central to the BA Architecture programme at Sheffield, acting as a laboratory for the testing of creative and critical ideas, whilst at the same time developing fundamental architectural skills. Design work is fully supported by lecture courses that range from the humanities to the sciences. This combination of studio and lectures develops the intellectual requirements of a University education, as well as preparing students for a professional career. Teaching draws on the exceptional research base of the School, which means that lectures and design teaching are delivered by people at the forefront of their discipline. The ethos of the School combines innovation with rigour, qualities that are sought after by future employers.

The programme at Sheffield takes issues of sustainability seriously, addressing the social, economic and environmental responsibility of the architect. It promotes these values through innovative methods of teaching, which develop each student's own critical faculties and self-awareness. The programme does not promote any one style or approach over another, but encourages each student to develop their own response to the social, physical and environmental contexts presented by projects and coursework. Our aim is to develop graduates who are self-critical, confident enough to make appropriate decisions, and aware of the wider responsibilities of the architect.

The BA Architecture programme is recognised by the Royal Institute of British Architects as giving exemption from RIBA Part 1. The qualification is also prescribed by the Architects Registration Board (ARB), subject to periodic review by ARB, for the purposes of entry onto the United Kingdom Register of Architects.

Most of our BA Architecture graduates continue on to complete their architectural education with a two year RIBA Part 2 course. However, a number of graduates draw on the intellectual breadth and depth of the programme to enter other professions.

Further information is available from the departmental website: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/architecture.

16. Programme aims

Programmes offered by 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 BA Architecture has the following additional aims:

9. To provide a thorough introduction to architectural design.
10. To develop skills in communication which allow students to express their ideas orally, visually and through writing.
11. To provide the historical and cultural background within which architecture is considered.
12. To provide an introduction to the technologies employed in architecture.
13. To develop an understanding of sustainable aspects which affect architectural design, including an awareness of environmental issues.
14. To introduce the professional and social context of architecture.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:	
K1	A systematic understanding of the design process, and the way that this is informed by analysis, research, context, budget and brief.
K2	A conceptual understanding of the historical and cultural context of architectural design, and the way this may inform the design process.
K3	An appreciation and understanding of the representational conventions in architecture, as well as the ability to use them appropriately.
K4	A knowledge and understanding of how buildings are designed and built in the context of architectural and professional practice, as well as the wider construction and regulatory framework.
K5	Knowledge and ability to implement architectural technologies, environmental design and construction methods, and the way that these may be integrated in a design.
K6	Knowledge and understanding of environmental issues which inform the design and production of architecture, including an awareness of sustainable issues.
K7	Awareness and understanding of some key theories and methodologies of architectural design.
K8	Awareness of the professional context of architecture.

Skills and other attributes:	
S1	Ability to engage as a designer with issues of site, scale, environment, context, programme and users' needs.
S2	Ability to develop both a design brief and a design proposal in response to that brief, with an awareness of the needs of the potential users.
S3	Ability to produce coherent architectural designs that integrate historical, theoretical, practical, technical, environmental and professional aspects of the programme.

S4	Ability to make informed judgements about the spatial, aesthetic, technical, intellectual and social qualities of a design within the scope and scale of the wider environment.
S5	Ability to use a range of visual, written and verbal techniques, and an ability to use these appropriately in order to communicate and critically appraise architectural designs and ideas to a variety of interest groups.
S6	Ability to conduct independent investigation as well as to work in groups, including the ability to manage and appraise working practices in these contexts.
S7	Competence in design-based software and multimedia applications, as well as such IT skills as word-processing, e-mail and use of the internet.
S8	Further transferable skills, valuable for employment in a variety of areas, including information gathering, the development of individual resourcefulness, time management, analytical thinking and the ability to identify problems together with logical and lateral ways of resolving them.
S9	The ability to listen to, and respond appropriately to the views of others, as well as the ability to acknowledge the limits of one's own skills and knowledge.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

The programme uses a wide range of teaching techniques:

(a) Approximately half the programme is based in the design studio, with problem-based learning, delivered through frequent small group and individual tutorials: these are complemented with reviews, where design work is discussed by student peers, postgraduate students, members of staff and invited reviewers. The number of people involved in any review is kept small (10-12) in order to encourage discussion and reflection on the review as a learning process. The design studio is promoted as a place of integration of skills and knowledge; thus all of these teaching and learning methods combine to develop the design understanding, research, analytical and communication skills of the students in order to meet the appropriate objectives listed in K1-K8 and S1-S9 above.

The remainder of the modules employ a variety of techniques, including:

(b) Lecture series, used frequently at all Levels in order to impart essential knowledge relating to K1-K8 above.

(c) Workshop sessions, used at all Levels to introduce and develop key skills listed in S5-S9; but also includes model making, computer graphics and drawing/presentation skills.

(d) IT based courses, which introduce and develop ability to use design-based software and multimedia applications, architecture-specific research skills such as Architecture Periodicals Index (API) and Technical Index (TI) databases, as well as general IT skills such as word-processing, e-mail, use of the internet and presentation skills, relating to K3, K8, and S5-S9 above.

(e) Seminars, which are usually student-led and designed to reinforce and develop information imparted through lectures by allowing students to work through, analyse, understand and respond to that information, developing areas K1-K2, K4-K6, and S1-S4.

(f) Tutorials. Aside from the frequent individual tutorials in the design studio mentioned above, small group and individual tutorials are used infrequently at all Levels. When they are used, they generally address the preparation for written assessments and address the outcomes listed in K1-K2, K4-K6, K8, S4-S6.

(g) Independent study, which is essential to the successful completion of the programme. New students are introduced to study skills through practical experience in all Level 1 modules. 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, the preparation for assessments, and the broader development of knowledge of the field of study. Provision exists at Level 3 for supervised independent study leading to the writing of a project (the 'Special Study'). Independent study thus contributes to the development of all the programme learning outcomes K1-K8 and S1-S9.

(h) Field trips and site visits, used at all Levels to expand the range of students' experience of architecture. Visits are made to particular buildings and to sites of more general urban, natural and historical interest, both in the UK and abroad. Such visits support both analytical and design work, and again contribute to the

development of all the programme learning outcomes, but in particular K1-K2, K4-K6 and S1-S4.

This range of teaching methods used helps the student to develop a whole range of transferable skills (listed in S8), which will enable them to provide a reflective and informed response to the range of issues, both design and technical, facing an architect.

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

Studio based modules make up at least 50% of the total credits taken in each Level. The learning and assessment processes mirror one another, and take place and develop concurrently. Formative assessment occurs through dialogue with oneself, with other students, with and among tutors, where judgments concerning quality are reached by consensus. Summative assessment will generally occur through the submission of **coursework**, usually in the form of a **portfolio**. This will, in particular, address the design and technical aspects of the programme (K1, K3-K6, S1-S2), but students are also expected to demonstrate awareness of cultural, theoretical, historical and professional aspects in their design. Integration of all these aspects is also covered through design work (K2, K7-K8, S3-S5).

Whilst the studio course does not directly assess the transferable skills noted in S6, S8-S9, the ability to express these skills is 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.

Assessment of modules in supporting subjects (Humanities, Science and Technology, etc.) uses appropriate combinations of the following:

Essay writing and **coursework** designed to test subject knowledge, communication skills, increasing autonomy in student learning, and the development of transferable skills (K2, K4-K6, S3-S6); as well as demonstrating evidence of knowledge of, and a critical attitude towards, the components covered in the programme objectives.

Written examinations designed to test subject knowledge (K4-K5).

In accordance with University regulations, extra weighting is given to third year grades when determining degree classifications. Grades at Level 3 (FHEQ Level 6) are weighted 2:1 compared to grades at Level 2 (FHEQ Level 5). Grades at Level 1 (FHEQ Level 4) are not included in the final degree classification, but core modules must be passed for purposes of professional validation.

19. Reference points

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

The learning outcomes of this programme have been informed by the following list of important documents both from the University of Sheffield and professional architectural bodies. We have taken care to ensure that the programme offered is distinctive in that it focuses on ensuring that the teaching is research led, there is student self-development, all aspects of the programme are integrated in a meaningful way, and the aspiration for a rigorous knowledge base is realised. The learning outcomes also place emphasis on social and environmental aspects of architecture within the programme.

Internal documents

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

Education Strategy (2020-27)
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision/our-pillars/education

The research interests of departmental staff and the research strategy of the Faculty of Architectural Studies.

External documents

These generally inform the benchmark level that is required for professional validation purposes, and cover the more generic requirements for architecture courses at this level.

Subject Benchmark Statement
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Higher Education Credit Framework for England (2021)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/the-quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications
https://arb.org.uk/information-for-schools-of-architecture/arb-criteria/

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme provides a very **coherent programme of study** and progression across Levels. Due to the nature of the discipline and the requirements of external validation, all modules are core modules. Within this coherent framework, **student choice** is provided for in a variety of ways:

- Within core modules, an increasing amount of responsibility is taken by students in identifying and developing their own particular area of study and individual approach to the subject areas as they pass from Level 1 through to Level 3.

BA Architecture is accredited by the RIBA and the RIBA. It is primarily for students who, following further study and qualifications, wish to pursue a career as an architect.

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

21. Student development over the course of study

Level 1 students begin the first year with a wide and differing range of skills and preconceptions about architecture. The Level 1 course sets out to begin a more informed debate as to what architecture may be and what skills are needed to develop as an architectural designer. The course aims to widen students' perception of architecture by introducing them to the diversity and richness of historical and contemporary ideas and in so doing offers a range of potential starting points for the design process. Primary issues of cultural and technological significance are introduced within a series of studio projects that are intended to stimulate both individual exploration and collective discussion.

The studio project work is supported and complemented by the series of lecture courses. The content of these courses is designed to unfold from general ideas and concepts towards more specific detailed concerns in both humanities and technical subjects, encouraging an increasing awareness and cross-fertilisation of theoretical and abstract ideas to the practical activity of designing and making.

Communication workshops are run on a regular basis, and provide the practical opportunity to experiment with and develop representational skills in graphics, multi-media, and model-making through which architectural ideas can be communicated.

Level 2 pursues two broad aims. Firstly, to consolidate, expand, and increase confidence in manipulating the approaches to understanding and generating architecture, along with technical and communication skills, that were introduced during Level 1. Secondly, to increase the range and scope of analysis undertaken in order to enable students to design a wider range of building types and external spaces with more complex cultural, planning and technical requirements.

Studio project work is again supported and complemented by the series of lecture courses and skills workshops. Within the studio project work there is scope for the students to choose between different projects thus allowing them some scope to develop their particular skills.

Level 3 generally seeks to develop greater complexity in its consideration of design philosophy, building design and technology, developing from the objectives of Levels 1 and 2. Students will be expected to be able to synthesise the knowledge gained in the different subject areas during the degree programme and demonstrate this through integrated design projects. Students are encouraged to develop their own philosophies and approaches, and take the initiative for pursuing their projects in greater depth.

As with Levels 1 and 2, studio project work allows for choice and is supported / complemented by the series of lecture courses and skills workshops.

Those students who elect to take the dual Architecture and Planning qualification (which formally starts at Diploma level) are required to take some Level 2 and 3 undergraduate modules from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

In all areas of teaching and assessment from Level 1 through to Level 3, emphasis is increasingly placed on autonomy in student learning, as studio project work and coursework for other modules demand increasingly independent approaches (S6-9).

Modules from Level 1 through to Level 3 employ teaching and assessment methods introduced in Section 18 that are designed increasingly to encourage and test the development of analytical, problem-solving and transferable skills such as those set out in Section 17 (S6-S9) above.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Because architecture programmes range over the academic territory from humanities to science, students are not expected to have a particular subject background, but will need to show some evidence of Art. Most of our applications come with a mixture of science, humanities and arts-based experience that is useful but not mandatory.

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available in the University's online prospectus at https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/study.

23. Additional information

Further information is available on the departmental website: https://www.sheffield.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 https://students.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid.