

Module code	ARC403	Level	4
Module title	Design Studio 1: Architectural Foundations		
Status	Core		
Teaching Period	Spring		
Courses on which the module is taught	BA (Hons) Architecture		
Prerequisite modules	None		
Notional learning hours	400	Credit value	40
		ECTS Credits	20
Field trips?	This module includes compulsory study trips and site visits within London. Students are responsible for local travel costs; most exhibition entrance fees and other activities will be covered by the course.		
Additional costs	Students must purchase essential materials and equipment, including sketchbooks, journals, drawing tools, and model-making supplies. Basic model-making resources will be provided in limited quantities; students are encouraged to source additional materials independently.		
Content notes	The module incorporates a health and safety induction for workshop tools and materials, including emergency procedures and protective measures for individuals and equipment.		

1. Module description

This module introduces you to the architectural design process through investigation, analysis, drawing, model-making, and visual communication. Building on skills developed in Term 1, you will develop a small-scale architectural proposal that responds to a real site, exploring its spatial, social, and environmental context. Through iterative exploration, you will investigate how form, structure, and materiality contribute to the creation of meaningful architectural experiences.

You will learn to communicate your design ideas effectively through drawings, models, and presentations, understanding how architectural proposals convey identity, atmosphere, and intent to different users. The module provides a broad foundation in design principles that underpin architectural thinking, from site analysis and concept generation to detailed resolution, establishing core skills essential to the study and practice of architecture.

2. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

Innovation (MLO 02)

Define and compare architectural value propositions, combining curiosity and creativity to explore spatial, structural, and environmental possibilities

Professional Development (MLO 03)

Identify opportunities for your learning and your personal and professional development through engaging with architectural design processes, and emerging practices within the built environment.

Decision-making (MLO 04)

Investigate and contrast different architectural design and spatial ideas, including your own, to inform design decision-making in response to a brief and real-world architectural constraints.

Discipline Skills (MLO 08)

Use established architectural drawing, modelling, and digital/analogue representation techniques to communicate design intent, in relation to space, form, and inhabitation.

Human and Environmental Impact (MLO 10)

Explore the impact of architectural design decisions on users, communities, and the environment, including considerations of sustainability.

3. Learning and teaching methods, and reasonable adjustments

This module adopts an active-learning and studio-based approach that places you at the centre of your own architectural learning journey. Each week, you will engage in hands-on activities that involve researching site(s) and precedent case studies, analysing spatial and environmental conditions, sketching, model-making, and testing design ideas through iteration. Learning will be centred on the design studio, supported by lectures, workshops, field visits, and tutorials where you will present, discuss, and critique your own and peers’ work.

Collaborative learning is embedded throughout the early stages of the design process, including shared site investigations, joint spatial and contextual analyses, precedent discussions, and peer review activities. Group work is integral to the studio environment, where collective enquiry, shared investigation, and peer dialogue support the development of critical, creative, and professional design skills.

You will explore a range of investigatory and representational methods to understand how design ideas emerge and evolve through sketches, architectural drawings, model making and reflection. Through continuous feedback from tutors, peers, and guest critics, you will develop your confidence and ability to make design decisions. This approach integrates thinking and doing, enabling you to learn through direct experience and build the foundations of your architectural design practice.

Theoretical enquiry is explicitly connected to physical model making as a core working method within this module. You will develop proposals through iterative cycles of drawing, physical modelling and digital production, using models as active tools to test spatial, structural, material and environmental ideas. Where appropriate, work extends into 1:1 prototyping, enabling you to explore form, joint and junction, tolerances and buildability as part of the design process.

Learning hours			400
Directed learning			144
Workshops/ classes/ seminars/ lead events	Supervision	Studio time	Other
24		120	
Guided/Self-guided learning			256

Students seeking reasonable adjustments should consult the current Disability Policy: <https://www.regents.ac.uk/policies>

4. Assessments and weighting, reasonable adjustment, and feedback methods

Assessment component 1: Design Portfolio and Presentation Review (60%)

Indicative effort: 36-48 pages at A3 or equivalent for portfolio and 10mins for presentations.

You will develop a small-scale architectural design project supported by a sketchbook documenting your thinking process. The submission includes the sketchbook and an architecture portfolio, recording research, precedent case study and analysis, sketches, diagrams, concept models, and reflections that trace the iterative design process from site analysis to concept formation. The portfolio must also present the final architectural proposal through drawings, models, visuals, and graphical material that demonstrate Architectural Communication skills and includes a summative 10-minute presentation review.

Assessment component 2: Project Development Process (40%)

Indicative effort: 24 - 32 pages at A3 or equivalent

You will submit a project process document that evidences the development and refinement of your architectural project with a focus on technical and environmental integration. This portfolio includes an Environmental and Technical Studies Report, demonstrating how environmental design principles, climate-responsive strategies, material performance, and environmental control methods inform your design decisions. Supporting diagrams, drawings, and technical studies must illustrate how environmental and technical analysis strengthens your architectural proposal.

Mapping of assessment tasks:

Assessment components	MLO2	MLO3	MLO4	MLO8	ML10
Design Portfolio and Presentation	X	X		X	X
Project Development Process	X		X		X

The above assessment components are summative. Students will have the opportunity for formative assessment and feedback before each summative assessment.

5. Indicative resources

Architectural Communication

Canizaro, V.B. (2024). *Experiential Visualization in Architectural Design Media: How it actually works*. Routledge.

Ching, F. D. K. (2023) *Architecture: Form, Space and Order*. 5th edn. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Christenson, M. (2019). *Theories and Practices of Architectural Representation*. Routledge.

Kubisova, D. (2024) *The Architect's Pocket Guide to Portfolio Design*. Abingdon: Routledge.

McMorrough, J. (2015). *Drawing for Architects: How to Explore Concepts, Define Elements, and Create Effective Built Design through Illustration*. Beverly, Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers. (Available as eBook)

Shaikh, H. (2023) *Drawing Attention: Architecture in the age of social media*. London: RIBA Publishing.

Environmental Technology

Chudley, R., Greeno, R. and Kovac, K. (2024) *Chudley and Greeno's Building Construction Handbook*. 13th edn. Abingdon: Routledge.

Pelsmakers, S., Donovan, E., Hoggard, A. and Kozminska, U. (2022) *Designing for the Climate Emergency: A Guide for Architecture Students*. London: RIBA Publishing.

Architectural Design

Buxton, P. (2021) *Metric Handbook: Planning and Design Data*. London: Routledge. (Available as eBook and print)

Farrall, K. and Jackson, J. (2024) *100 Site Analysis Essentials: An Architect's Guide*. London: RIBA Publishing.

Gorman, A. and Delaney, M. (2022) *Studio Craft & Technique for Architects*. London: Laurence King. (Available as eBook)

Makstutis, G. (2018) *Design Process in Architecture: From Concept to Completion*. London: Laurence King.

Zumthor, P. (2006) *Thinking Architecture*. 3rd edn. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Journals

AA Files

Architects' Journal

Architectural Design

Detail

Domus

ICON