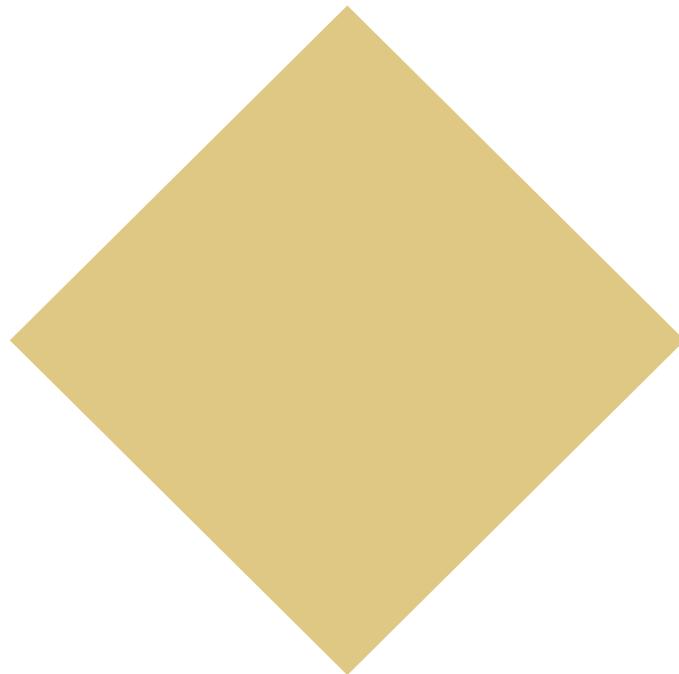


**Architectural Association
School of Architecture**



AA PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

AA FOUNDATION AWARD IN ARCHITECTURE, ART AND DESIGN

2025–2026

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SECTION 1: THE SCHOOL

ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

1.1 THIS GUIDE / WHERE WE ARE

The purpose of this Programme Guide is to provide information regarding the way in which the School and its programmes are organised. It also provides an introduction to terms and definitions, common principles of content and assessment, the way that the programmes are structured, how each Course is organised, credited, and regulated, and what you will be expected to do.

Other documents you will find essential in orienting yourself within the School include the following:

- [The AA School Academic Regulations](#)
- [The AA School Quality Manual](#)
- [The Core Studies Course Handbook](#)

Our principal buildings, where most of the academic programmes are based, are at 32-39 Bedford Square, 4 and 16 Morwell Street and 1 and 1A Montague Street in Bloomsbury, Central London. The Design and Make Programme is located in AA's Hooke Park, in Dorset.

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1.2 ACADEMIC ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Overall Academic Organisation

The AA School of Architecture is an independent school governed by the Architectural Association (Inc.). It consists of c. 900 full-time students, who study in the Foundation, Intermediate, Diploma and Postgraduate programmes. The AA School is made-up of four distinct parts:

- A one-year Foundation Programme for students contemplating a career in architecture or related arts subjects. The Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design is separate to and does not form part of the 5-year full-time course in architecture.
- The Intermediate and Diploma Programmes offering the 5-year full-time course in architecture:
 - The AA Intermediate Programme leading to the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and providing exemption from ARB/RIBA Part 1 after 3 years of full-time study (please note that students that complete the programme after June 2027 will receive RIBA Part 1 only);
 - The AA Diploma Programme leading to the Master of Architecture (MArch) and providing exemption from ARB/RIBA Part 2 after 2 years of full-time study.
- The postgraduate programmes comprising 11 distinct programmes of advanced full-time and part-time studies:
 - 10 taught Master level programmes (PGDip/MA/MSc/MArch/MFA/Taught MPhil)
 - A PhD degree. The AA is an Affiliated Research Centre (ARC) of the OU for the delivery and validation of the PhD degree.
- The AA Professional Practice and Practical Experience Examination leading to exemption from the ARB/RIBA Part 3 Examination, the entry requirement to professional registration as an architect. The course and examination are open to anyone who has successfully obtained their Part 1 and Part 2 qualifications (or equivalency from overseas schools of architecture) and also to qualified practitioners for the purpose of Continuing Professional Development.

Enhancing Quality of Learning: Reviews and Monitoring

All programmes in the AA School are subject to systematic internal and external review on a regular basis. This includes review by the School's Academic Committee and Board (see details below), annual monitoring and periodic review for each programme, annual feedback from External Examiners, student feedback as well as annual and periodic review from the School's professional bodies and validation partners the Open University, ARB and RIBA.

Academic Governance

The Academic Board (AB) is the sovereign academic body charged with responsibility for the academic governance of the AA School and its programmes of study. It is chaired by the Director of the AA School. The Academic Board delegates responsibilities to, and monitors the progress, effectiveness and recommendations of the AA School's Academic Committee (AC). The Academic Board demonstrates its accountability to the AA Council by submission of quarterly reports and an annual report.

SECTION 2: AWARD SPECIFICATION

2.1 AWARD SUMMARY INFORMATION		
Awarding body	Architectural Association School of Architecture	
Partner institution(s)	N/A	
Location of Study/campus	36 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3ES	
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies	Office for Students / QAA	
Award and titles		
	Award	Title
Final award	AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design	AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design
Credits	120 credits	
Intermediate award	N/A	
FHEQ Level	4	
	Duration of study (standard)	Maximum registration period
Full-time	1 year	2 years
Sandwich	N/A	N/A
Part Time	N/A	N/A
Distance	N/A	N/A
Start date for programme	September 2025	
Course codes/categories		
UCAS code	N/A	
CATS points for course	N/A	
QAA Subject Benchmark	Architecture 2020	
Admissions agency		
UCAS	N/A	
Direct to School	✓	
Admissions criteria		
Requirements	Refer to AA School Academic Regulations	
Language	Refer to AA School Academic Regulations	
Contacts		
Programme Head	Saskia Lewis	
School Registrar	Belinda Flaherty	
Examination and Assessment		
External Examiners 2024-25	Thandi Loewenson, TBC	
Examination Board(s)	External Examiners, Programme Head, School Director, Head of Teaching (Chair), Head of Learning, School Registrar (Administrator)	
Approval/review dates		
	Approval date	Review date
Programme Specification Validation	Feb 2020, revalidated Feb 2024	Feb 2029

2.2 PROGRAMME INTRODUCTION

The AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design offers a full-time, one-year studio-based course for students who wish to pursue architecture and related arts subjects. A hands-on course of creative design, thinking and learning, it is intended for individuals with limited previous experience in creative fields, but with an interest in exploring, and preparing for, a future academic or professional career in architecture or the broader creative arts.

While competitor courses help a student to prepare a portfolio directed to a specific degree course the AA Foundation in Architecture, Art and Design uses the visual and verbal terminology of architecture to explore the broader field of each students' creative interests and passions. Rather than 'diagnostic' it can be seen as a year of investment in the creative 'self' before the identifying an interest in securing a more focused creative path within a degree course, architectural or within related creative fields. The resultant portfolio describes the approach, interests, and explorations of the individual and identifies the creative contexts and practices that interest them. This year provides the opportunity for each individual to explore and experiment with techniques and terminology to develop self-critique and confidence and learn how take productive, creative risks.

Although the Foundation programme does not form part of the five-year full-time architecture course, students do study along-side their first-year peers during elected Core Studies courses and join conversations within both Intermediate and Diploma programme units over the course of the year. They learn an appropriately broad range of visual and verbal terminology, techniques (analogue and digital), history and theory and self-critique that enable them to begin to be more comfortably conversant with the complexity of conversations on-going within the larger AA school and Public Programme.

The studio is open daily, and the typical Foundation week consists of a mandatory 15 hours of taught study or supervised studio at a minimum, with the development of work led by individuals in a self-initiated dynamic.

The Foundation studio aims to cultivate a positive emancipatory studio culture, encouraging students to develop methods of driving their work forward in an exciting experimental manner. We look at working within small groups reflecting the collective collaborative ways in which buildings are designed and built as well as celebrating periods when students will be making their own work individually. We work around the idea of each student developing something of a '*design family*', colleagues who can support, critique and sometimes literally be present in the work of one another.

Although briefs are set, conversations initiated and skills taught, students should be clear that they take a clear part in driving their own agenda. Although term 1 could be understood as broadly didactic, terms 2 and 3 see students increasingly driving the direction, content, conversation and delivery of their work. We are working with each student to discover and identify their creative ethics and passions.

Climate Matters are widely discussed around the AA school. The Foundation invites students to consider their part in planetary responsibility. Considering that any design will eventually make a significant demand on planetary resources, right at the start of their education students need to consider how they might contribute to systems of repair and amelioration and begin to ask intelligent questions to solicit the most contemporary advice at any time in the future.

On the successful completion of the Foundation programme students are awarded the AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design. Students on the Foundation programme are required to produce a final complete academic portfolio for assessment and must successfully complete the course to progress to First Year at the AA. Entry to First Year follows an interview and, if offered a place, the successful completion of the AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design.

2.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES: AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design; FHEQ LEVEL 4	
Learning Outcomes 'LO'	Aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and QAA Subject Benchmark (Architecture), on successful completion of the AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design, students will be able to demonstrate:
01	Develop knowledge and understanding of scale with reference to form, the development of visual awareness and an ability to develop experiments and evaluations through the development of the portfolio.
02	Demonstrate an ability present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, to articulate research and design reasoning and relationship to design development.
03	Use a series of investigations to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in relation to the brief.
04	Demonstrate an ability to discuss and debate, visually and verbally, their research and design reasoning accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments to challenge preconceptions and open dialogues.
05	Demonstrate knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with design research, and how referenced precedents informs design research.
06	Demonstrate an ability to present, evaluate and interpret research material gathered in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements for their own design brief.
07	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems through precedent and its relation to design development.
08	Communicate the results of their research accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments that define the context of their design decisions.
09	Demonstrate an ability to identify personal interests and observations and use those interests to motivate and develop design work.
10	Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to progressing and developing a design proposal through exploration in various media.
11	Demonstrate an ability to communicate their design ideas with structured and coherent arguments through a broad range of media.

2.4 ACADEMIC CREDIT FRAMEWORK

AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design (FHEQ Level 4)	Studio Practice	Contextual	Media Studies	
Introduction Week				
Term 1 Week 1				
Term 1 Week 2				
Term 1 Week 3				
Term 1 Week 4				
Term 1 Week 5				
Term 1 Week 6				
Term 1 Week 7				
Term 1 Week 8				
Term 1 Week 9				
Term 1 Week 10				
Term 1 Week 11				
Term 1 Week 12				
Credit accumulation		10	10	20
<i>(Christmas Break)</i>				
Term 2 Week 1				
Term 2 Week 2				
Term 2 Week 3				
Term 2 Week 4				
Term 2 Week 5				
Term 2 Week 6				
Term 2 Week 7				
Term 2 Week 8				
Term 2 Week 9				
Term 2 Week 10				
Term 2 Week 11				
Credit accumulation		10	10	20
<i>(Easter Break)</i>				
Term 3 Week 1				
Term 3 Week 2				
Term 3 Week 3				
Term 3 Week 4				
Term 3 Week 5				
Term 3 Week 6				
Term 3 Week 7				
Term 3 Week 8				
Term 3 Week 9				
Credit accumulation	70	10		80
Credit TOTAL	70	30	20	120

2.5 TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning Methods

This programme is undertaken in full-time mode only. Students are taught via one-to-one tutorials, workshops, seminars, and group discussions that encourage independent intellectual and practical creative development. The focus is to provide an appropriate foundation for creative and research activity in architecture and related areas. Student work is developed in conjunction with lectures on history and theory (context/research) alongside the introduction of each brief and applicable skills workshops to support creative responses to each brief. The development of a wide range of visual communication skills is emphasised throughout the Foundation programme. Timetables and assignments are set by the Head of Foundation to ensure parity.

Methods of Assessment

The assessment regulations are set out in the [AA School Academic Regulations](#). The criteria for assessment is set out in the module descriptions. Students are given oral feedback at all assessment points and written feedback following formative assessments and end of year summative assessments.

Formative Assessment

Continual formative assessment is provided weekly at tutorials, periodic studio pin-ups and juries. Contextual progression is checked at the ends of terms 1 and 2. More formal formative assessment is provided in the Studio Practice module through the January Progress Reviews in week 13 (week 1 of Term 2) after which written feedback is provided to assist students in the preparation for their subsequent work.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment of Foundation Studio Practice takes place at 'Tables' in week 30. Portfolios of drawings, images, models, films, and animations are presented either physically or digitally (according to AA direction) to a Review Panel of Foundation tutors to ensure parity of assessment. Summative assessment of Foundation Contextual takes place at the end of each term; and Media Studies at the end of Term 1 and Term 2.

Throughout the year we run 7 briefs, 3 in terms 1 and 2 and one final brief in term 3. The portfolio examined at the end of year is an individual compilation, it will describe the journey of that particular individual through the work that they have done. No two portfolios will be the same and neither will any two dialogues of group work. Individual briefs are not marked, rather we concentrate on how the work from the year is organized, relates to an individual's references and attempts to convincingly articulate lines of thought that might have developed through projects relating them to one another.

Grading Outcomes and Criteria

Pass: Demonstrates a good level of achievement overall, meeting all aspects of the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass; context and analysis, process and synthesis, and resolution and communication. The submission is complete under the requirements of the brief set. Coherence of thought is evidenced throughout the work, with an appreciation of topic and an appropriate level of critical reflection and insight. Developmental and final work is documented clearly in a suitably presented submission.

Fail: Unsatisfactory level of achievement overall, which fails to meet all aspects of the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass; context and analysis, process and synthesis, and resolution and communication. The submission is incomplete under the requirements of the brief set. The work is assessed as being incoherent, demonstrating little appreciation of topic, development or effort. The submission is insufficient in quantity and demonstrates a lack of engagement. An appropriate level of critical reflection and insight is not evidenced. Developmental and final work is not documented to an appropriate level of clarity, or presented to a suitable standard. This assessment is also the automatic result of failure to meet minimum attendance requirements. If a Fail assessment is made, the panel offer the student an opportunity to repeat the Foundation programme (to a maximum of 1 further attempt).

Evaluating and Improving Quality/Quality Indicators

AA Academic Committee / Academic Board	Annual Monitoring Periodic Review every 5 years
QAA Subject Review	Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

2.6 AWARD CLASSIFICATION

Completion of the AA Foundation programme and award of the AA Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design is classified only as Pass.

2.7 LEARNING SUPPORT

Every student has continuous access to a design studio with storage space, along with access to all of the AA School’s facilities at Bedford Square in London and in Hooke Park, Dorset. Introductory sessions are provided by the relevant academic resources departments at the beginning of the academic year to all students. Tutors are available to meet their students for tutorials, seminars, and/or juries every week, as the timetable directs.

On-site resources at Bedford Square include a large wood and metal workshop, a model making workshop for materials such as clay and plastics, a digital prototyping lab, an audio-visual lab, a digital photography studio, an IT lab with both Mac and PCs, a drawing materials and print shop, the AA bookshop, AA library and AA archives. The AA also has its own bar and restaurant at Bedford Square.

Hooke Park in Dorset is the AA’s satellite campus that hosts short residential workshops for visiting groups of students from throughout the school. Hooke Park is a 150-hectare working forest inside that provides the primary source of timber for student-led construction projects and also has large workshops, an IT lab, catering facilities and accommodation for students visiting from London.

The AA Writing Centre supports students in the development of their written communication skills and helps to strengthen reading, critical research and creative writing capabilities across all programmes and year groups.

AA Wellbeing offers students confidential, one-to-one wellbeing support and workshops. The team is available to explore students concerns, anxieties and emotional difficulties to support their wellbeing and academic progression. Difficulties may include the effects of bereavement, loss, lack of confidence, mood regulation, relationship difficulties or managing mental health.

The AA’s London based Public Programme is an extensive series of public events dedicated to contemporary architectural culture: exhibitions, members’ events, lectures, seminars and conferences, along with regular book launches hosted by the AA bookshop. Evening lectures are available online to view at Hooke Park. A weekly published school events lists is published through the communications studio.

School-wide facilities and resources are described in more details on the [AA Website](#).