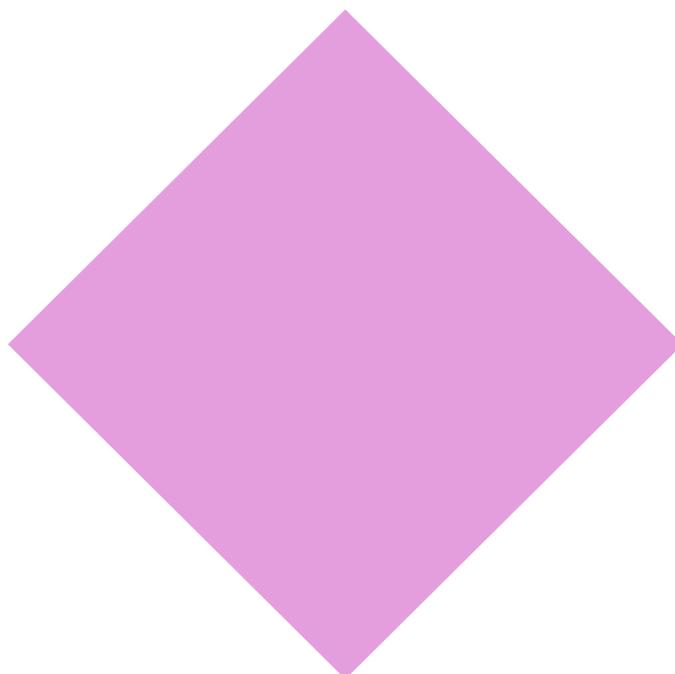


**Architectural Association
School of Architecture**



AA PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

TAUGHT MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (Taught MPhil)

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 Programme 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.

Address

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Contact Details

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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: DEGREE SPECIFICATION

2.1 TAUGHT MPhil DEGREE 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		
Final award	Taught Master of Philosophy (Taught MPhil)	Taught MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design (Projective Cities)
Credits	240	
Intermediate award	Postgraduate Certificate (120+ at Level 7)	
FHEQ Level	7	
	Duration of study (standard)	Maximum registration period
Full-time	18 months (5 terms)	30 months
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		
School Registrar	Belinda Flaherty	
Programme Heads	Platon Issaias and Hamed Khosravi (Architecture and Urban Design (Projective Cities))	
Examination and Assessment		
External Examiners 2024-25	Charlotte von Moos, TBC	
Examination Board(s)	External Examiners, Programme Heads, School Director, Head of Teaching (Chair), Head of Learning, School Registrar (Administrator)	
Approval/review dates		
Programme Specification Validation	Approval date May 2020, revalidated May 2023	Review date May 2028

2.2 TAUGHT MPhil PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Taught MPhil programmes are delivered over an 18-month period consisting of five terms and two phases. Phase 1 (terms 1 and 2) introduces key design and research methodologies through a comprehensive set of studio, seminar and academic writing modules. Specialised workshops and guest seminars are delivered alongside core teaching. Term 3 is dedicated to the development of an individual dissertation proposal. In Phase 2 (terms 4 and 5) candidates develop their individual dissertation dedicated to an independent research project.

The MPhil awards consist of 240 credits at FHEQ Level 7, each credit equating to approximately 10 learning hours split between different courses of varying credit values and submissions.

2.3 DEGREE CREDIT FRAMEWORK

GENERAL TAUGHT MPhil CREDIT FRAMEWORK 18 months – 240 Credits	
Core Studio / Thesis	150 credits
Core Module 1	20 credits
Core Module 2	20 credits
Core Module 3	20 credits
Core Module 4	20 credits
Core Module 5	10 credits
	240 credits
For programme specific credit frameworks please refer to the programme pages below	

2.4 TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning

The required knowledge and understanding are acquired through the design studios, seminar courses, and academic writing courses. Intellectual and research skills are developed throughout the programme, in particular during the Seminar Courses and the Dissertation, while the Design Studios present opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding in an analytical design context. Individual research, presentations, written essays and, in particular, the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation, encourage students to make critical and analytical observations and formulate hypotheses. Students are introduced to research methods and academic writing throughout the programme. Research methods, techniques, and analytical skills are developed through all coursework.

Evaluating and Improving Quality/Quality Indicators

AA Academic Committee / Academic Board	Annual Monitoring Reports are submitted to the Academic Committee each September, reflecting on examiner reports, student and staff feedback, and student progression and achievement data. The Academic Committee then reports findings to the Academic Board. Refer to AA School Quality Manual for further detail.
Professional Accreditation and Validation	Revalidation for the Taught MPhil takes place every 5 years. Next revalidation: May 2028 Refer to AA School Quality Manual for further detail

Assessment

All submissions are assessed and marked by two or more members of the programme’s regular academic staff and confirmed by the Internal Assessment Board. Marks and feedback are provided to students within 15 working days/3 weeks of initial submission. This timeframe is not inclusive of closure weeks. In exceptional circumstances where this timeframe is not met, students will be informed of when marks and feedback will be released at the earliest opportunity. Student work is then reviewed by the Taught MPhil External Examiners, whose role is to ensure fair and objective marking and the maintenance of high academic standards across the School’s Taught MPhil programme. The Taught MPhil Examination Board has the responsibility for confirming the final marking of all submitted work and decisions on distinctions and resubmissions.

Marking of all course work is on a scale of 0–100% with a pass mark of 50% and grading as shown below:

80% or above	Distinction
70–79%	High Pass
50–69%	Pass (Low Pass = 50%)
49% or below	Fail

To qualify for the Taught MPhil, students must attain the 50% threshold mark on both the coursework average, and on the final project average mark. An overall final mark is then calculated as the weighted average of coursework and Dissertation/Design Thesis. Large differences (of more than 10 percentage points) in the marking of the assessors are moderated by the Programme Head or an appointed assessor from the Programme staff when necessary.

Grading Outcomes and Criteria

Distinction: Demonstrates an exceptional level of achievement overall, significantly exceeding the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass. The submission is complete under the requirements of the brief set. Coherence of thought is expressed throughout the work, with an exhaustive appreciation of topic and a rigorous application of critical reflection and insight. Developmental and final work is documented in a highly effective manner in a well-structured and skilfully presented submission.

High Pass: Demonstrates a high level of achievement overall, exceeding the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass. The submission is complete under the requirements of the brief set. Coherence of thought is articulated throughout the work, with a comprehensive appreciation of topic and a thorough application of critical reflection and insight. Developmental and final work is documented clearly in a coherently structured and well-presented submission.

Pass: Demonstrates a good level of achievement overall, meeting all aspects of the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass. 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.

Low Pass: Work attaining the standard of Pass, but which has previously been assessed as Fail and/or has been submitted after the advertised date/time. Low Pass is capped at 50%.

Fail: Unsatisfactory level of achievement overall, which fails to meet all aspects of the assessment criteria required to attain a Pass. 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. A submission receiving a Fail assessment can only achieve a Low Pass outcome upon successful resubmission. Students who have no further opportunity to undertake repeat studies are asked to leave the School.

2.5 AWARD CLASSIFICATION

The Taught MPhil degree is awarded as either:

- A pass.
- A 'Distinction' when the overall final mark is 80% or higher.

Other grading from coursework is registered in the School's database and is available on transcripts but do not appear on certificates.

2.6 AA MASTERS TO PhD PATHWAY

Upon successful completion of Master's study, graduates from the MA, MSc, PG MArch, MFA and Taught MPhil programmes are given the opportunity to develop their Master's thesis into a proposal to apply for the AA PhD programme. Applications to the PhD through this pathway can be considered for commencement in the academic year immediately after the student's graduation from their Master's programme.

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.

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](#).

SECTION 3:

TAUGHT MPhil IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN (Projective Cities)

3.1 PROGRAMME INTRODUCTION

The **Taught MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design (Projective Cities)** is an 18-month, research and design programme that examines questions at the intersection of architecture, urban design and planning. The programme undertakes systematic analysis, design experimentation, theoretical speculation and critical writing, all of which focus on the contemporary city. Student projects combine design with traditional forms of research, while challenging disciplinary boundaries and contributing to emerging spatial design practice and knowledge. The programme recognises the need for multidisciplinary understanding and new design research training to meet the demands of contemporary architectural and urban practice. Each cohort of students addresses a shared theme which they take as the starting point for individual research agendas. The ambition of this agenda is to use comparative analysis to investigate the different organisational, formal, programmatic and material structures that govern how we live together, and to develop new design proposals in response to these investigations. Our intention is to rethink the informal and formal relations between subjects, spaces, structural and non-structural elements, objects and protocols of use and occupation in cities; doing so will enable us to understand specific architectures and the broader political and social discourses that define them.

In 2025-26, Projective Cities is introducing a new research trajectory: New Forms of Welfare State. The ambition is to investigate, by comparative analysis, the different organizational, formal, programmatic, and material particularities that define the Architecture of Welfare State and its urban, territorial, and infrastructural manifestation. In this new research framework Projective Cities will closely collaborate with The Autonomy Institute.

Building on the work and writing of the Institute, the design studios will initiate new experimentation in designing residential spaces that explore the intersections and boundaries of autonomous work, free time, gendered, domestic and emotional labour. From appliances to apartment floor plans: all are tools in challenging and complicating the family unit and feminised work.

Additionally, in collaboration with The Autonomy Institute students will engage with an evolving landscape of welfare services, aiming to reimagine the spatial and social interfaces between citizens and state services. From housing to national food hubs and social care facilities, students will explore how these infrastructures can work with each other in a new space of unconditionality.

Programme Statements

Projective Cities recognises architecture and the city as a collective form of knowledge shaped by cultural, social, political, and economic contexts.

Projective Cities specifically raises the question of what kind of project and research arises from architecture and architectural urbanism. It sets out to define the status and methods of design research. This is understood both as an intellectual problem, exploring the relationship between theory and design for knowledge production and the discipline, as well as a practical problem, of the way that design research can affect practice.

Projective Cities has been highly successful in preparing its graduates for diverse careers in academia and practice, with graduate destinations including PhD programmes, academic or research careers and joining leading design offices.

Projective Cities is a critical forum to engage with questions of governance and development in the context of global challenges of urbanisation. Its objective is to respond to current urban, environmental and social crises by rethinking the agency of spatial design and development within specific political, economic, social and cultural contexts.

Projective Cities prepares its candidates for independent research through a framework of rigorous design and research methodologies. The first year of the programme is taught, introducing students to research methods, academic writing, architectural and urban histories and theories, advanced analytical techniques and computational design in preparation for a substantial dissertation project. At the end of the first year, students submit a research proposal. This is developed in the second year, leading to an integrated design and written dissertation.

Projective Cities seeks candidates with a desire to develop substantial and original research. It seeks exceptional thinkers, gifted designers and critical writers with an interest in the future of our cities.

The ambitions of **Projective Cities** are framed by the following methodological and pedagogical propositions through which our research is clarified:

That the contemporary city can be read as an architectural project and the city as a projection of the possibilities of architecture.

That typical and typological are complementary disciplinary frameworks and conceptual modes of thinking in which reason acquires a critical and conjectural structure.

That the urban plan and its cultural, social, political, historical, and economic contexts are defined by architectural design operative at different scales.

That architectural and urban design are intelligible as formal and theoretical products of disciplinary activity as well as the collective formal outcome of socio-political forces.

That design and research activities are inseparable in architecture and urbanism, and that knowledge production (theory) and formal production (practice) are methodologically linked.

Architecture and urbanism are symbiotic modes of enquiry driven by relevance and agency within a field and not novelty for their own sake. This field is defined in terms of a series of distinct diagrams that are always social and spatial. We aim to investigate the politics, the asymmetries and power relations that define all these diagrammatic relations.

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

Projective Cities aims to develop innovative researchers capable of working across cultural, disciplinary, and sectoral boundaries. It hereby also aims to foster practice-led research and new design research methodology in spatial design disciplines.

Objectives

The objectives of the programme are:

- to enable students to gain mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct design research, and accepting accountability for related decision making, including the use of supervision;
- to provide students with knowledge of theory, methods, and practice of research needed to conduct and complete independent and original research projects in architecture, urban design, planning and related spatial design disciplines;
- to train students in the combination of theoretical, historical, and practical design research;
- to prepare students for diverse research careers, including doctoral level studies or research-led practice.

3.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES: Taught MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design (Projective Cities); FHEQ LEVEL 7	
Learning Outcomes 'LO'	Aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and QAA Subject Benchmark (Architecture), on successful completion of the MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design (Projective Cities) students will be able to:
A	Knowledge and Understanding
A1	Knowledge: A systematic understanding of knowledge across architecture, urban design, and planning, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or insights at the forefront of related scholarship and professional practice.
A2	Ethics: An awareness of and ability to manage the implications of ethical issues.
A3	Methodology: A comprehensive understanding of techniques and methodologies applicable to their own research and advanced scholarship (theory and practice-led design research).
B	Cognitive and Intellectual Skills (Generic)
B1	Analysis: The ability to analyse complex issues both systematically and creatively, making sound judgements in the absence of complete data or in the context of incomplete or contradictory areas of knowledge.
B2	Synthesis: The ability to apply knowledge in an original manner, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.
B3	Evaluation: A conceptual understanding enabling the critical evaluation of current research, advanced scholarship, and methodologies, especially in the disciplines of architecture, urban design, and planning; and the ability to develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
B4	Application: The capacity for self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems.
C	Practical and Professional Skills (Subject Specific)
C1	Application of Skills: The capacity for decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, exercising initiative and personal responsibility with an awareness of good practice.
C2	Technical Skills: The ability to develop new technical skills to a high level.
D	Key and Transferable Skills (Generic)
D1	Learning: The capacity for independent learning required for continuing professional development, using the full range of learning resources. When applicable, the ability to work effectively within a group as leader or member and the skills to manage conflict effectively.
D2	Self-evaluation: The ability to critically reflect on their own and others' learning in order to improve their practice.
D3	Management: The ability to competently and autonomously plan and undertake research.
D4	Communication: The ability to communicate research and conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

3.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The assessment of submitted work is based on the following overall assessment, in addition to specific ones given for each module. All learning outcomes must be met in order to achieve a pass overall. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, ability and skills in the following areas:

DESIGN:

Context and analysis

The work demonstrates a systematic understanding and critical awareness of relevant contextual factors such as site conditions, social, political, historical, economic, environmental and ethical issues. Analysis is undertaken in relation to the needs of the intended user groups and the complexities of the location.

Appropriate conceptual, critical and/or technological precedents, methodologies, practices and/or tools inform the parameters of the brief, satisfying specific contextual and analytical requirements.

Process and synthesis

Research into appropriate contextual, conceptual, critical and/or technological precedents, methodologies, practices and/or tools is synthesised into the design process, allowing for creative decision-making, inventive design strategies, experimentation and originality, explored from both user and designer perspectives.

Feedback is integrated into a self-directed design process that demonstrates criticality and independent learning skills, and the ability to work in a group where necessary, required for continuing professional and academic development.

Resolution and communication

Design proposals are resolved to a satisfactory standard based on the functional and aesthetic criteria and/or project themes set by the brief, with appropriate methodologies deployed in the production of appropriately ambitious propositional design work. Project work is organised, structured and communicated effectively through a range of considered representational methods and visual, verbal and written skills.

HISTORY AND THEORY:

Research and knowledge acquisition

Research into the chosen area of study is independently undertaken, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of the relevant social, political, historical, theoretical, economic, environmental and/or ethical contexts, concepts, ideas and/or precedents at the forefront of the discipline, being addressed through systematic enquiry.

Approach and development

The work submitted demonstrates an inventive and original approach to the consolidation and development of research, with a consistent process of synthesising acquired knowledge is evidenced in the work. The structures, methods and/or tools utilised in the production of the work demonstrate initiative, self-directed learning, the ability to work in a group where necessary, and the skills to make complex decisions.

Argument and communication

The work demonstrates the ability to devise and sustain complex arguments, contextualised effectively in a wider field of relevant ideas with a critical position determined. Conclusions and/or reflections are well executed, with good judgement shown in the absence of complete data. Written and visual communication skills are evidenced to a high standard throughout, and the work demonstrates the abilities developed to undertake further research.

3.5 CREDIT FRAMEWORK

Term	Course Title	Credits
1	Core Module 1 – Studio 1: Parts, Units and Groups: Analysis of Architectural Precedents	20
2	Core Module 2 – Studio 2: Scales: From Room to the City	20
1	Core Module 3 – Seminar 1: Architectural Theories, Design and Research Methods, <i>Atlas on Welfare Architecture</i>	15
2	Core Module 4 – Seminar 2: Projects of the City, <i>London: City of Welfare</i>	15
1	Core Module 5a – Academic Writing 1	10
2	Core Module 5b – Academic Writing 2	10
	Core Studio/Thesis	150 (as below)
3	Academic Writing 3	10
3	Thesis-Studio: Representations, Investigations and Diagrams	40
4 + 5	Dissertation	100

3.6 TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

The required knowledge and understanding are acquired through the seminar courses, design studios, and academic writing courses. Intellectual and research skills are developed throughout the programme, in particular, Seminar Courses and the Dissertation, while the Design Studios present opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding in an analytical design context. Individual research, presentations, written essays and the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation, encourages students to make critical and analytical observations and formulate hypotheses.

Students are introduced to research methods, academic writing throughout the programme. An initial comprehensive reading list is provided at the start of the course, which is supplemented by guidance on reading in the seminars and supervision as relevant. Research methods, techniques, and analytical skills are developed through all coursework.

The course requires students to take responsibility in planning their own research and provides regular opportunities to present their work through visual, written, and oral means. Through the coursework, students develop independently and systematically how to frame concepts, techniques, and ideas in creative and rigorous ways. Regular feedback is provided in the form of tutorials, submission assessments, or review reports.

Students benefit from continuous support and regular feedback sessions in individual and group tutorials throughout the programme to assist, direct, and monitor progress.

During Year 1, integrated design studios and workshops, seminars, and academic writing courses are the core modules providing students with the technical skills and knowledge of research methodologies and practices necessary to formulate and complete an independent research project. While design studios and seminars train analytical research skills and methods, students learn in complementary workshops the practical skills required for design research.

The start of Year 2 corresponds to the beginning of the next academic year at the AA. Year 2 is dedicated to the development of the designed and written Dissertation. Throughout the year, students are closely guided by their personal dissertation supervisor(s) and have access to other programme staff and external consultants for further or specialist advice as needed and agreed with the Programme Heads.

Seminar Courses

The pedagogical aim of the seminar courses is to provide students with a knowledge and understanding of architectural and urban histories and theories and to develop their intellectual and research skills. A particular focus is given to the fields of knowledge that define design research in architecture and urban design.

All seminars have a common structure and method, with appropriate minor variation in delivery during each term of Year 1. Each session takes up an entire morning or afternoon. A typical session consists of a lecture or seminar by the instructor, presentations by students, and group discussions. Students are asked to read preparatory or follow up material, and to make short oral or written individual presentations.

Each seminar course has a written submission (circa 4,000 words). The seminars are supported by academic writing courses as well as individual and group tutorials to aid students in their essay development. Students present an essay outline and submit a draft prior to the final submission.

All seminars are open to members of the AA.

Academic Writing Courses

The aim of the academic writing courses is to teach and exercise academic writing conventions and general writing skills, preparing students for longer written submissions.

The courses are organised as seminars, writing workshops, and individual tutorials. Seminars discuss the structure and purpose of writing, as well as academic conventions, while workshops provide writing exercises and direct feedback.

Each course is assessed through several short-written pieces of up to 2,000 words, with students provided with feedback on several drafts prior to submission.

Design Studios and Skills Workshops

The aim of the design studios is to provide students with a knowledge and understanding of architectural and urban design practices and to develop their analytical rigour and creativity through case study research and design exercises. The design studios are complemented by workshops to develop the technical skills to draw, model, and analyse architecture and urban design at an advanced level.

Students work in small groups or individually as assigned at the beginning of each exercise. They document their progress for individual tutorials each week and regularly present to their peers, programme staff, and external reviewers.

The work is compiled and submitted at the end of each term in a studio report for assessment. Submissions are based on graphical, visual, and physical work (diagrams, drawings, collages, models etc.) as appropriate. The studio reports include concise writing and analysis of relevant projects, theories, and histories to clearly establish the context and framing of the studies, thereby directly linking to the seminar courses.

Thesis-Studio

The Thesis-Studio combines the teaching and learning strategies of the design studios and seminar courses. Its aim is to provide students with the knowledge and understanding to formulate an independent research and design agenda. Throughout the Thesis-Studio, seminars and studio tutorials aid students to define their research enquiry.

At the end of the Thesis-Studio, students present their Dissertation Proposal in a formal review with programme staff and invited external reviewers for final comments prior to submission. The submission consists of an integrated written portion (equivalent to an essay, circa 4,000 words), an illustrated research dossier (equivalent to a studio report), and preliminary design proposals as appropriate. The Dissertation Proposal is to clearly frame the planned research by providing: a problem definition, research aims, discussion of relevant literature and case studies, research methodology, a plan of execution, and preliminary design briefs and proposals.

During the Thesis-Studio, the Taught Phase and Research Phase overlap, with students beginning work on their Dissertation.

Dissertation

The aim of the designed and written Dissertation is to provide students with an opportunity to conduct a substantial, original, and independent research project. The Dissertation represents more than 40% of the total credits for the MPhil degree and reflects on the programme's areas of research and a student's personal interests, background, special skills, and knowledge.

Dissertation supervision is in principle through the two Programme Heads. Other programme staff members could be assigned as supervisors by agreement with the Programme Heads. Students are able to meet their personal supervisor(s) at least once a week for advice and guidance. In addition, students can seek direction from external expert consultants as needed.

Supervision and progress monitoring of students during the Dissertation takes place through the following formats:

Once a week: Individual tutorials with supervisor(s).

Once a month: Dissertation Forum in which all students of a cohort present and discuss their research.

Once a term: Internal progress review with programme staff.

In addition, there is a Final Design Review (beginning of Term 5) and a Final Presentation (end of Term 5) with invited critics. Students receive oral feedback in all reviews and tutorials prior to submission of the Dissertation.

The minimum requirement to qualify for the MPhil degree is the submission of a designed-and-written Dissertation that consist of comprehensive design proposals at architectural and urban scales and integrated written research consisting of 15,000 words. The Dissertation is to demonstrate academic rigour and originality.

Tutorials

Within all modules, the progress of students is monitored and assisted through regular weekly individual and group tutorials. The modules have appointed tutors who are available at scheduled times. However, teaching staff are available for additional tutorials if necessary.

Project Presentations and Reviews

Individual and group presentations are regular events and part of all modules. Their aim is to develop presentation skills, but also serve as a means to monitor progress by staff as well as between peers.

Student Feedback

Feedback is essential for the continued development, improvement, and updating of the course. Student feedback on the programme's structure, content, delivery, and methodology is welcomed at any time. A formal and minuted feedback meeting with programme staff and students takes place at the beginning of Term 2. Students are invited to take part in the AA School survey, and to a group meeting with the School Director at the end of each academic year.

Study Trips and Special Events

Study trips involve visits to buildings and cities of interest, meetings with designers, experts, and researchers outside the School. Special events, such as symposia or reviews with other students, depend on the topics and interests of the on-going research agendas.

Additional Costs

Students are encouraged to use AA Computer Lab and all other facilities, where multiple licenced software and applications can be used. There is no need for any specialised subscriptions or licences. The programme anticipates the following additional costs:

Study Trips: £700

Printing: £350 for the entire course + £150 for dissertation (printing / binding)

Materials: £150 (model making)

Use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The programme, aligned with the AA's policies on the use of generative AI (please refer to *Guidance on the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in student work at the AA School of Architecture*, recognises its use in the production of student work across design and writing of and about architecture. Although there is an incredible potential that these new tools are offering, students must be aware of very serious issues that are emerging regarding copyright, inaccuracy, and, of course, bias. Therefore, any use of generative AI should be done with very high caution, and it is advised to be declared and discussed with Programme Heads and Module Leads in advance. Moreover, and in regard to essays and other writing submissions there should be additional care and provision in the use of these tools, since it often leads to serious violations of academic protocols, i.e. plagiarism.