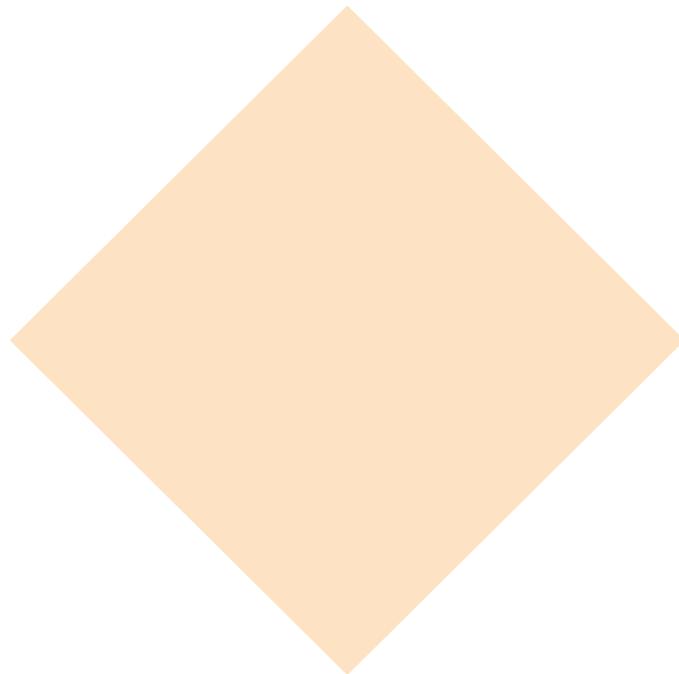


**Architectural Association
School of Architecture**



AA PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ARCHITECTURE –
AA TRANSFER PROGRAMME**

2025–2026 (2026–2027 subject to approval)

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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 Unit and 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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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, Transfer, Diploma and Postgraduate programmes. The AA School is made-up of five 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.
- A one-year Transfer Programme for graduates with a degree in a non-cognate discipline that are contemplating a career 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 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 / Quality Assurance Agency	
Award and titles		
	Award	Title
Final award	Graduate Certificate	GradCert in Architecture (AA Transfer)
Credits	120	
Intermediate award	N/A	
FHEQ Level	Level 6	
	Duration of study (standard)	Maximum registration period
Full-time	1 year (3 terms)	21 months
Sandwich	N/A	N/A
Part Time	N/A	N/A
Distance	N/A	N/A
Start date for programme	September 2026	
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 and Programme Specific Admission Criteria	
Language	Refer to AA School Academic Regulations	
Contacts		
School Registrar	Belinda Flaherty	
Coordinator	Rachel Macpherson, Ciara Waldron	
Examination and Assessment		
External Examiners	TBC	
Examination Board(s)	Programme Head, External Examiners, School Director, Head of Teaching (Chair), Head of Learning, School Registrar (Administrator)	
Approval/review dates	Approval date	Review date

Programme Specification Validation	May 2025	May 2030
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2.2 AIMS AND GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The Transfer aims to empower students to question how architecture manifests in the world.

The Programme introduces students to architecture through design-led exploration grounded in their diverse backgrounds. In the first term, short micro-projects encourage experimentation with drawing, modelling, material studies, and key precedents. Terms 2 and 3 centre on the Pilot Building Project, where students develop their own briefs and integrate skills in site, programme, spatial strategy, and material thinking, supported by tutors and invited specialists.

Throughout the year, students engage with the wider AA community through lectures, practice visits, and collaborative opportunities. The programme culminates in an individual project that articulates each student's emerging interests and future direction, preparing them for entry into the Diploma Programme (MArch).

The Programme exists alongside public events and publications, spontaneous discussions, unexpected encounters and vibrant exchanges that take place throughout the academic year. This confluence of activity keeps the Programme in a constant transformative flux that permeates the spaces of the school, and the projects, ideas and ambitions of the students.

The Programme aims to produce graduates with the following attributes:

- Ability to generate design proposals using understanding of a body of knowledge, some at current boundaries of professional practice and the academic discipline of architecture
- Ability to apply a range of communication methods and media to present design proposals clearly and effectively
- Ability to evaluate evidence, arguments, and assumptions in order to make and present sound judgements within a structured discourse relating to architectural culture, theory and design
- Knowledge of the context of the architect and the construction industry, and the professional qualities needed for decision making in complex and unpredictable circumstances
- Ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required for further professional education.

2.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcomes: GradCert, FHEQ level 6		Design Studio (GradCert)	History and Theory Studies Second and Third Year (HIS2 and HIS1)	Environmental and Technical Studies Second Year EE2 Term 1 (ETS2 T1)	Environmental and Technical Studies Second Year MBT Term 1 (ETS2 T1)	Environmental and Technical Studies Second Year Term 2 (ETS2 T2)	Professional Practice 1 Third Year (PP1)
Transfer Learning Outcome 'TR'	On completion of the 2nd Year and 3rd Year of this Programme, and in conjunction with the aims of the Programme at this award level, graduates will have:						
	The ability to create architectural design that questions and satisfies both aesthetic and technical requirements						
TR1.1	The ability to prepare and present building design projects of diverse scale, complexity and type in a variety of contexts, using a range of media, and in response to a brief	TR1.1					
TR1.2	The ability to understand and deploy relevant constructional and structural systems, the role of design in responding to climate change by considering environmental strategies, and the regulatory requirements that apply to the design and construction of a comprehensive design project			TR1.2	TR1.2		
TR1.3	The ability to develop a systematic conceptual and critical approach to architectural design that integrates and satisfies the aesthetic aspects of a building and the technical requirements of its construction and the needs of the user	TR1.3					
	A general knowledge of the histories and theories of architecture and the related arts, technologies and human sciences						
TR2.1	A general knowledge of the cultural, social and intellectual histories, theories and technologies that influence the design of buildings	TR2.1	TR2.1				
TR2.2	A general knowledge of the influence of history and theory on the spatial, social and technological aspects of architecture			TR2.2			
TR2.3	A knowledge and systematic understanding of the application of appropriate theoretical concepts to studio design projects, demonstrating a reflective and critical approach	TR2.3					

	Knowledge of the fine arts as an influence on the quality of architectural design						
TR3.1	Knowledge of how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design		TR3.1				
TR3.2	Knowledge of the creative application of the fine arts and their relevance and impact on architecture	TR3.2	TR3.2				
TR3.3	Knowledge of the creative application of such work to studio design projects, in terms of their conceptualisation and representation	TR3.3					
	Knowledge of urban design, planning and the skills involved in the planning process						
TR4.1	Knowledge of theories of urban design and the planning of communities						TR4.1
TR4.2	Knowledge of the influence of design and development of cities, past and present on the contemporary built environment		TR4.2				
TR4.3	Awareness of current planning policy and development control legislation, including social and economic aspects along with guidance relating to the built environment on climate change and the ecological crisis, and the relevance of these to design development						TR4.3
	Understanding and analysis of the relationship between people and buildings, and the buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings and the spaces between them to human needs and scale						
TR5.1	Understanding and analysis of the needs and aspirations of building users	TR5.1		TR5.1	TR5.1	TR5.1	
TR5.2	Understanding and analysis of the relationships between buildings, communities, habitats and a changing climate, the relationships between social sustainability, social justice and environmental sustainability, and the importance of advocating for sustainable design solutions within the precepts of sustainable design that encourage biodiversity and support access to green space			TR5.2	TR5.2		
TR5.3	Understanding and analysis of the way in which buildings fit into their local context	TR5.3		TR5.3	TR5.3		

	Understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, in particular in preparing briefs that take account of social factors						
TR6.1	Understanding of the nature of professionalism, the duties and responsibilities of architects to clients, building users, constructors, co-professionals and wider society, and the importance of sharing building performance data						TR6.1
TR6.2	Understanding of the role of the architect within the design team and construction industry, recognising the importance of current methods and trends in the construction of the built environment			TR6.2	TR6.2	TR6.2	TR6.2
TR6.3	Understanding and exploration of the potential impact of building projects on existing and proposed communities	TR6.3					TR6.3
	Understanding and critically applying chosen methods of investigation and preparation of the brief for a design project						
TR7.1	Understanding of the need to critically review and test precedents relevant to the function, organisation and technological strategy of design proposals	TR7.1					TR7.1
TR7.2	Understanding of the need to critically appraise and prepare building briefs of diverse scales and types, to define client and use requirements and their appropriateness to site and context	TR7.2					TR7.2
TR7.3	Understanding of the critical contribution of architects and co-professionals to the formulation of the brief, and the methods of investigation used in its preparation						TR7.3
	Systematic understanding of the structural design, constructional and engineering problems associated with a range of building designs						
TR8.1	Systematic understanding of the investigation, critical appraisal and selection of alternative structural, constructional and material systems relevant to a range of architectural designs				TR8.1	TR8.1	
TR8.2	Systematic understanding of the strategies for building construction, including environmentally sustainable design principles in the design of a building and its envelope, with the ability to integrate knowledge of structural principles and construction techniques				TR8.2	TR8.2	
TR8.3	Systematic understanding of the physical properties, characteristics and environmental impact, including embodied carbon and resource implications, of building materials, components and systems and specification choices				TR8.3	TR8.3	

	Knowledge and understanding of physical problems and technologies and the function of buildings so as provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate						
TR9.1	Knowledge and testing of the principles associated with designing optimum visual, thermal and acoustic environments			TR9.1			
TR9.2	Knowledge and testing of systems for human comfort realised within precepts of sustainable design, relating to temperature, humidity, sound and lighting, informed by an understanding of climate science, energy use, carbon emissions, and the role of building performance evaluations			TR9.2	TR9.2		
TR9.3	Knowledge and testing of the strategies for building services, the use of on-site renewable energy generation or further offsetting to achieve decarbonisation, and ability to integrate these into a design project			TR9.3			
	Acquire coherent design skills to meet building users' requirements within the constraints imposed by cost factors and building regulations						
TR10.1	Acquire coherent skills to critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, construction systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design				TR10.1	TR10.1	TR10.1
TR10.2	Acquire coherent skills to understand the cost control mechanisms which operated during the development of a project						TR10.2
TR10.3	Acquire coherent skills to prepare designs that meet building users' requirements and comply with UK legislation, appropriate performance standards and health and safety requirements, demonstrating an ethical approach to fire and life safety and an understanding of the consequences of poor decisions in order to protect building users from hazards						TR10.3
	Knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating a range of design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall planning						
TR11.1	Knowledge of the fundamental legal, professional and statutory responsibilities of the architects, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in the negotiation and approval of architectural designs, including land law, development control, building regulations and health and safety legislation, alongside an understanding of the risks and benefits of different procurement routes with regards to fire and life safety						TR11.1
TR11.2	Knowledge of the professional inter-relationships of individuals and organisations involved in procuring and delivering architectural projects, how these are defined through contractual and organisational structures, the significance of maintaining competence and the importance of collaboration and consultation in fire safety design						TR11.2
TR11.3	Knowledge of a range of management theories and business principles related to running both an architect's practice and architectural projects, recognising current and emerging trends in the construction industry						TR11.3

2.4 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme structure consists of study over one academic year, leading to the award of the Graduate Certificate, with the award title: GradCert in Architecture (AA Transfer).

Students undertake compulsory courses, including Design Studio, one History and Theory Studies courses, two Environmental and Technical Studies courses, and one compulsory Professional Practice course – a total of five courses. The programme-specific Media Studies equivalent workshops will be conducted throughout the year.

The programme is structured so that a minimum of 50% of students' time is focused on design activities through the Design Studio. The study of architecture and design is supported by Core Studies, which include History and Theory, Environmental and Technical Studies, and Professional Practice.

Students must pass all courses to progress to the next academic year. Only students who achieve a pass in the design studio and all compulsory courses are awarded the GradCert in Architecture (AA Transfer).

GradCert Courses

Title	Term	Status	Credits
DESIGN STUDIO	1, 2, 3	Compulsory	70
HISTORY AND THEORY STUDIES COURSES (HTS 2)	2	Choose 1 of 11 courses	10
ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES: ENVIRONMENT & MATERIALS	1	Compulsory	10
ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES: STRUCTURAL TYPOLOGIES AND DESIGN (ETS 2)	2	Compulsory	10
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	1 and 2	Compulsory	20

Credit Framework

GradCert FHEQ Level 6	Unit/Design	History and Theory Studies	Environmental and Technical Studies	Professional Practice 1
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 Vacation)</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 40
<i>(Easter Vacation)</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				
Summer Week 3				
Credit accumulation	60	/	/	60
Credit TOTAL	70	10	20	20 120

2.5 TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning

This programme is undertaken in full-time mode only. Throughout the year, students are taught design in a small studio-based environment via one-to-one tutorials, workshops, seminars, and group discussions that encourage independent intellectual and practical design development. The focus of the programme is to provide an appropriate foundation for design, research and professional activity in architecture and related areas.

Studio programme detail, teaching schedules, events and assignments are set by the Programme Head. In parallel to the year-long design work explored in the studio, students are exposed to a series of courses (Core Studies) that expand their learning.

The integration of Core Studies courses of History and Theory Studies, Environmental and Technical Studies and Professional Practice ensures critical contextualisation. In addition, the School offers a wide Public Programme of lectures, symposia, book launches, exhibitions and other events that collectively push the boundaries of architectural education and culture today and enable students to have an inquisitive mind.

Detailed information on individual programmes and courses such as references, bibliography, teaching schedules and events are described in the extended brief.

Assessment

The Assessment regulations are set out in the [AA School Academic Regulations](#).

A range of assessment methods is adopted to test the learning outcomes within each studio and course. Formative and summative assessments for Design Studio are through presentation of a portfolio of design work. The criteria for assessment are set out in the Design Studio Descriptors, and students are given written feedback following the final presentation of individual portfolios. Assessments for Core Studies courses are through specific submission or presentation of design work, written assignments, seminar presentations, some of which may be individually or in groups.

Regulations

Refer to [AA School Academic Regulations](#).

In addition, the following course-specific regulations apply:

- All units or courses identified as compulsory must be passed.

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.
Internal Programme Revalidation	Revalidation for the GradCert takes place every 5 years. Next revalidation: May 2030. Refer to AA School Quality Manual for further detail.

2.6 AWARD CLASSIFICATION

The award of the GradCert in Architecture (AA Transfer) 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.

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](#).