UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Programme Specification 2025-26

ARCHITECTURE TRIPOS

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Department of Architecture
Accreditation details	Architects Registration Board (ARB); Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
Name of final award	BA (Hons) and ARB/RIBA Part 1
Programme title	Architecture Tripos
UCAS code	K100
HECoS code(s)	100122 (architecture)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Architecture
Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
Date specification produced	December 2024

Teaching Provision and Facilities

There are 23 UTOs in the Department, all of whom contribute to lecture courses. A wide range of specialist contributors, including some UTOs, participate in lecture courses and design studios. . Alongside the UTOs, the Department employs 25 Undergraduate Design Fellows; they are practising architects or designers who teach in the Department part-time to run or assist in studio teaching and manage studio projects. Studio reviews and crits are attended by critics who are practising architects, architectural designers and/or academics. Student one-to-one supervision takes place in the studio and additional teaching is provided by the Colleges who employ UTOs, CTOs, postgraduate students et al. ~~etc~~. to provide supervisions.

Undergraduate teaching takes place in the main Faculty premises, shared with the Department of History of Art, at 1-5 Scroope Terrace, in the first floor studio in the James Dyson Building and lecture rooms in the next-door Department of Engineering in Trumpington Street. Architecture and History of Art also share a Faculty Library of approximately 30,000 volumes. Students are provided with a workspace and drawing board in the studios and have access to computers and network facilities throughout.

Educational aims of programme

The programme aims to:

1. produce graduates equipped to play leading roles in the architectural profession, and in related areas of design, construction, environment and urbanism, and in scholarship;
2. emphasise an understanding of architecture in its cultural context.

Programme outcomes

The programme establishes both the basis for a body of technical, historical and theoretical knowledge and applies this knowledge to the study of the principal questions of building and the built environment. Design is the core discipline in architectural education and studio project work forms the major educational activity throughout the course. Students are encouraged to discover how the requirements of project work can be elicited, interpreted and translated into a design proposal by considering the complete cultural context and evolving appropriate forms. The application of knowledge acquired through lectures is central to this process. The programme outcomes incorporate the RIBA and ARB Criteria for validation and future accreditation at Part 2 level.

A Knowledge and understanding

Students gain a knowledge and understanding of:

1. Histories and theories of architecture, urban design and landscape design and their relevance to the design process.
2. Fundamental principles of building technologies (alternative materials, processes and techniques) to do with environmental design, construction methods and structural design and how they may be integrated in design proposals.
3. Regulatory frameworks and codes of practice that guide building construction.
4. The influences of the built environment on the design of individual buildings, urban planning concepts, the structure of past and present societies and wider global issues.
5. How buildings are designed and built in the context of practice and the construction industry, the professional qualities needed for decision making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.
6. The role of the architect in society and the professional and ethical responsibilities of architects.

Teaching/Learning methods and strategies
Acquisition of 1, 2, 4 and 5 is through a combination of lectures with appropriate provisions made for students with SSDs according to University policy), seminars, small group supervisions, classes, site visits, coursework and project work throughout the course, and through a supervised dissertation in year 3.

Acquisition of 3 and 5 is through lectures with appropriate provisions made for students with SSDs according to University policy), seminars, small group teaching and site visits throughout the course.

Acquisition of 5 and 6 is through site visits, seminars, small group supervisions, and coursework in relation to a series of case studies analysed in years 2 and 3, but students are introduced to these issues from year 1 in project work and in lectures and classes.

Throughout the course students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and research to supplement and consolidate what is being taught/learnt and to broaden their individual knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Assessment
Testing of the knowledge base is through submitted coursework (1-6), graded essays (1 and 4), a dissertation (any of 1-6) and assessed coursework in the form of case study reports (2-6), presentations (1-4) and technical design exercises, and reports (2-3). Evidence of a good grasp of the knowledge base and how it influences design decisions is also assessed during the examination of studio project work (1, 2, 4, 5).

Skills and other attributes
The project work set within the studio course is central to the acquisition of the intellectual, practical and transferable skills outlined below. The studio is the focus for both individual and collective activity: students learn from one-to-one supervision, from each other and from regular reviews by teaching staff and external critics at which the whole studio can be present. Project work draws on the knowledge acquired in the other forms of teaching previously outlined (and referred to in section 11) and provides a spur to pursuing more focused interests.

B Intellectual thinking skills – students are able to:

1. Address the issues raised by analysis of both the brief and the physical, social and cultural context of an architectural project, and weigh up how such concerns should inform the development and refinement of design proposals
2. Reflect upon and explore a variety of design ideas and ambitions and investigate how they can be articulated and refined in the design process;
3. Establish a coherent argument for a particular design strategy by demonstrating how an integrated response to technical, social and aesthetic concerns has determined design strategy;
4. Evaluate and learn from the work of others:
5. Form considered judgments about the spatial, technical, aesthetic and social qualities of a design with reference to the wider physical, political and cultural environment;
6. Plan, conduct and write up a programme of individual supervised research.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies
Skills 1-5 are acquired and developed through the project work set in the studio course. Skills 4 and 5 are also encouraged and exercised in seminar discussions and in coursework. Research and writing skills (6) are developed through essays presented in supervisions (small group teaching) and the individually supervised dissertation exercise of year 3. The mathematical and analytical skills required to address technical issues are honed via the examples and problems set by lecturers in technical courses.

Assessment
The maturity of skill in design is assessed through the examination of the portfolio of studio project work. Analytical skills are assessed through the examination of project work and submitted coursework.
Skill 6 is assessed principally through the examination of the year 3 dissertation.

C Practical skills – students are able to:

1. Develop coherent inventive architectural designs that integrate spatial thinking with thinking on technical, historical, and socio-cultural issues.
2. Produce drawings and models using the conventions of architectural representation in appropriate media to explore, test and convincingly communicate design ideas.
3. Develop proposals that take account of the codes of practice and health and safety considerations that guide design.
4. Work collaboratively as part of a team.
5. Prepare and compose brief technical reports and technical presentations.
6. Exercise informed judgments in the development of sustainable design.
7. Use technical, historical and theoretical literature effectively in architectural research.
8. Use IT skills in a relevant and creative manner for design, analysis and communication.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies
Practical skills are developed principally though studio project work, coursework and through the teaching and learning programme outlined above (and in section 11).

Skill 1 is taught and developed via studio project work.
Skills 2 and 8 are taught, explored and developed via studio project work, studio-based representation classes in year 1, and CAD classes and coursework in years 1 and 2, and the dissertation of year 3.
Skill 3 is taught in lectures and honed in project work.
Skill 4 is acquired via group project work in studio and coursework assignments.
Skill 5 is taught via classes in year 1 and feedback on reports written and presentations made as part of coursework assignments.
Skill 6 is taught through lectures, site-visits, and explored and developed through studio project work.
Skill 7 is taught and developed through essays, presentations, coursework assignments and the dissertation exercise of year 3.
Skill 8 is taught and developed through CAD classes, coursework, project work and the dissertation of year 3.

Assessment
Practical skills are assessed through the examination of studio project work, coursework presentations and reports, and the year 3 dissertation.

D Transferable skills – students are able to:

1. Communicate effectively in writing, verbally and through drawings and models;
2. Transfer techniques and solutions from one field of architecture to another;
3. Appraise and manage time and resources;
4. Communicate with and respond appropriately to advice from expert consultants;
5. Apply representational and analytical skills in the description and appraisal of design issues and solutions;
6. Adopt an open-minded approach in the appraisal of and response to design issues, requirements and opportunities;
7. Work autonomously in a self-directed manner;
8. Listen and critically respond to the views of others;
9. Respond to a broad constituency of interests and sensitively address social and ethical concerns.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies

Transferable skills are developed through the teaching and learning programme outlined above (and in section 11).
Skill 1 is taught through feedback on presentations, essays, coursework reports and project work.
Skill 2 is acquired as a result of having to consider architectural problems at a range of scales and in a range of cultural contexts in project work.
Skills 3, 6 and 7 are introduced and discussed in studio and in supervisions (small group teaching) in year 1 and developed via studio project work throughout the course and via the dissertation of year 3.
Skills 4 and 5 are developed through project work and coursework assignments.
Skills 8 and 9 are explicitly addressed in the discussion of comparative examples in group reviews of project work.

Assessment

Skills 1, 6, 8 and 9 are assessed primarily through written and portfolio examinations.
Skill 4 is assessed through portfolio examination.
Skills 5, 6 and 9 are assessed through coursework and the examination of studio project work.
The other skills are not formally assessed.

Programme structures and features and award requirements

The programme is only offered as a full time course, which lasts for three years and leads to the BA (Hons) degree and, subject to satisfactory completion of the studio work, to exemption from ~~ARB~~/RIBA Part 1.

Tripos Part IA

All students take the same studio and lecture courses leading to portfolio examination (Studio-work - worth 50% of the overall mark) and coursework in connection with the six lecture courses (worth 50% of the overall mark) submitted during the year:

- Studio-work

- Professional Skills I
- Form and Forces I
- Materials and Fabrication I
- Environmental Design I
- Introduction to the Histories and Theories of Architecture to 1800
- Introduction to the Histories and Theories of Architecture from 1800 to the present day
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All papers are marked through coursework.

Progression requirements

A minimum of a studio pass (40%) in the portfolio examination and (at the discretion of the examiners) a pass (40%) in the coursework for each of the papers in addition to an aggregate pass-mark overall.

Outcomes developed and assessed: A1-6, B 1-2, C 2, 4-5, D 1-3, 5-8

Tripos Part IB

Students are offered a choice of two or more studios. In addition to the Studio-work (worth 50% of the overall mark), a number of lecture courses and classes assessed through coursework (worth 50% of the overall mark) submitted during the year:

- Studio-work

- Professional Skills II
- Materials and Fabrication II
- Structural Design
- Environmental Design II

- Four Papers in History and Theory of Architecture

Key elements of the portfolio are also expected to address environmental design, construction and structures issues. Coursework essays count for 100% of the mark in Section B and in four papers in Section C.

Progression requirements

Minimum of a studio pass (40%) in the portfolio examination and, at the discretion of the examiners, a pass (40%) in each of the papers in addition to an aggregate pass-mark overall.

Outcomes developed and assessed: A 1-6, B 1-4, C 1-2, 4-5, D 1-8.

Tripos Part II

Students are offered a choice of three different Studio courses whose portfolio work is examined separately at the end of the third year. In addition a dissertation of 7-9,000 words, on a subject approved by the Faculty Board is undertaken, with the decision as to precise area of architectural research covered made by the individual student from a range of subjects/topics approved by the Faculty Board. In addition to the Studio work (worth 50% of overall mark) and the dissertation (worth 20% of the overall mark) a number of lecture courses in Sections B and C examined through coursework (worth 30% of the overall mark) at the end of the third year:

- Studio-work
- Professional Skills III
- Four papers: History and Theory, Integrated and Technical subjects
- Dissertation

Progression requirements

The award of the BA (Hons) degree and exemption from RIBA Part 1 requires a minimum of a sufficiently high studio pass (40%) in the portfolio examination and (at the discretion of the examiners) a pass (40%) in each of the written papers in addition to an aggregate pass-mark overall.

Outcomes developed and assessed: A 1-7, B 1-5, C 1-6, D 1-9.

Please note: this specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the opportunities provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each studio or lecture course can be found in the Undergraduate Architecture Tripos Syllabus. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Part 2 Progression requirements

The BA (Hons) in Architecture is validated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). It is an absolute requirement that candidates achieve a pass in design studio-work (40%) to achieve Honours. Failure in studio-work will override the weighted calculations of the overall mark.

A pass (40%) in each of the lecture courses is required at the discretion of examiners. Students must demonstrate fulfilment of the RIBA criteria to the satisfaction of the internal and external examiners, in addition to an aggregate pass mark overall.

Management of Education Quality and Standards

The University ensures high quality of teaching and learning in the following ways:

1. Scrutiny of the External Examiners Reports for all teaching programmes
2. Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys
3. Participation in the biennial Education Monitoring and Review Process to explore provision, share good practice and suggest constructive courses of action
4. Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes