Programme Specification MArch in Architecture (RIBA Part2)

Date of Publication to Students: September 2010
Minor Amendments April 2014 (revised course diagrams, clarification of entry requirements in line with changes to EU regulations)

NOTE: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detail on the specific learning outcomes, indicative content and the teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found (1) at [Faculty web site address], (2) in the Module Specifications and (3) in the Student Handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked within independent review processes undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency.

Awarding Institution / Body:	**Birmingham City University**
Teaching Institution:	**Birmingham School of Architecture, Birmingham Institute of Art & Design**
Interim Awards and Final Award:	**PG Cert (@ 60 credits)** **PG Diploma (@ 120 credits)** **MArch (@ 240 credits)** Note that an MA is not awarded at 180 credits due to professional body requirements superseding standard University regulations.
Programme Title:	**MArch in Architecture (RIBA Part 2)**
Main fields of Study:	Architectural Design, Technology and Environment, Cultural Context, Management Practice & Law, Communication
Modes of Study:	**Full Time 2 years** **Part Time 3 years**
Language of Study:	**English**
UCAS Code:	**N/A**
JACS Code:	

Professional Status of the programme (if applicable):

The programme has to meet the joint criteria set out by the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Postgraduate architecture courses are now also subject to the EU Directive and must meet those

criteria, which correspond to the aforementioned ARB/RIBA criteria.

Changes to courses must be submitted to ARB and RIBA for approval. Every 5 years the course is subject to an RIBA Visiting Board to ensure that professional body requirements and standards are being met.

Because of the professional body status the RIBA insists on a minimum 2-year programme, thus resulting in 240 credits rather than the traditional 120 or 180 at postgraduate level 7. Furthermore, students entering the programme must possess an undergraduate Honours Degree in Architecture usually with RIBA Part 1 Exemption. In exceptional circumstances, students are admitted to the M.Arch course without a recognised Part 1 qualification. The conditions for entry to the recognised Part Two Programme without a recognised Part 1 are defined below.

Route to becoming a Registered Architect in the UK

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is the independent statutory regulator of architects in the UK, and is also the UK¹s Competent Authority for Architects. In order to call yourself an 'architect' in the UK you must be registered with the ARB.

In order to register in the UK, you typically need to hold the following:

· An ARB prescribed UK qualification at Part 1;
· An ARB prescribed UK qualification at Part 2; and
· An ARB prescribed UK qualification at Part 3, including 24 months practical training experience.

This means that even if you complete and pass the prescribed Part Two qualification that you are embarking on, you will still need to hold an ARB prescribed qualification at Part 1 level (plus an ARB prescribed qualification at Part Three level together with the required period of practical training) before you can be admitted to the ARB Register.

If you already hold a first degree which covers the same subjects as a UK Part 1 qualification but which is not prescribed by the ARB, you may be eligible for ARB's Prescribed Examination, through which you can gain equivalence to the UK Part 1. If you successfully pass the Prescribed Examination at Part 1 level, you can use this for the purposes of UK Registration.

You can check whether any qualifications you may already hold are recognised by ARB and at which level, and you can find more information about the ARB's Prescribed Examinations and its requirements for registration via ARB¹s website - www.arb.org.uk.

ARB provide guidance on how students can satisfy their requirements but please note that Birmingham City University cannot guarantee that you will be accepted by the ARB, nor can Birmingham City University be held responsible for this.

Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points used to inform programme outcomes:

The RIBA wishes to encourage a dialogue supporting and promoting a diverse, engaging, rigorous, and intelligent raft of schools of architecture, each clearly distinguished from the other by defined academic objectives and a sense of the individual identity of their courses and qualifications. The RIBA further seeks to enhance the quality of architecture education by recognising and applauding experimentation, innovation, and professional relevance in course delivery, teaching methodology, and academic outcomes.

Whilst the validation criteria may offer a basis for curricular design, it is intended that schools develop courses pursuing distinctive interpretations of the practical and theoretical skills needed by professional architects occupying increasingly diverse roles, and working in a global economy. In the interests of achieving academic work of the highest order, neither course design nor the students' experience of architecture education should be proscribed by the criteria, although it remains important to establish threshold standards.

As the sole review body visiting schools of architecture, the primary purpose of RIBA boards is to consider the quality of student work, and make constructive observations to the host school based on this evidence. Following a visit, the RIBA is interested in continuing discussion with the school to ensure there is clarity about the desired outcomes, and support change where needed. The validation process is one of critical support contributing to the realisation of worthwhile academic objectives throughout all RIBA recognised schools, and the establishment of a global benchmark for standards in architecture education. A successful visiting board should evidence a course avoiding straightforward compliance with the criteria, one that demonstrates a creative interpretation of those criteria to produce a distinctive course offer and outcomes.

The primacy of the academic folio is central to the validation process. The academic portfolio is a complete chronological record of a student's design studio projects and taught course submissions, and includes essays, dissertations, reports, examination scripts, sketchbooks, models, and all other relevant graphic and documentary material enabling a visiting board to form recommendations about the attributes of graduates at each level of the course. The RIBA encourages a diversity of material in the academic portfolio, including 2- and 3D work, representation of the full range of both digital and analogue media, and the exploration of design ideas through making.

Broadly interpreted, design represents the key intellectual and practical skill of an architect; therefore, at least 50% of all assessed work at part 1 and at part 2 is to be executed as design studio projects. Taught course submissions should support this academic core, with particular evidence shown of students' ability to form structured, extended written theses. In introducing a single set of validation criteria, a critical emphasis is also now placed on the graduate attributes ('level indicators') at part 1 and at part 2. Developing and evidencing these attributes in graduates should be seen as the primary responsibility of courses in architecture; in considering students' work, visiting boards will first wish to confirm those attributes are present in students at each award level. It is the distinction between graduate attributes at part 1 and part 2 that should reflect the differing aspirations and intellectual agendas of part 1 and part 2 courses.

The RIBA thus particularly encourages the development of ambitious part 2 programmes reflecting the graduate attributes stated at part 2. This will ensure a clear distinction between part 1 as a first degree, and the enhanced standards expected from a higher degree.

The General Criteria at part 1 and part 2:

GC1 Ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements.

GC1 The graduate will have the ability to:

.1 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;

.2 understand the constructional and structural systems, the environmental strategies and the regulatory requirements that apply to the design and construction of a comprehensive design project;

.3 develop a 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.

GC2 Adequate knowledge of the histories and theories of architecture and the related arts, technologies and human sciences.

GC2 The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 the cultural, social and intellectual histories, theories and technologies that influence the design of buildings;

.2 the influence of history and theory on the spatial, social, and technological aspects of architecture;

.3 the application of appropriate theoretical concepts to studio design projects, demonstrating a reflective and critical approach.

GC3 Knowledge of the fine arts as an influence on the quality of architectural design.

GC3 The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design;

.2 the creative application of the fine arts and their relevance and impact on architecture;

.3 the creative application of such work to studio design projects, in terms of their conceptualisation and representation.

GC4 Adequate knowledge of urban design, planning and the skills involved in the planning process.

GC4 The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 theories of urban design and the planning of communities;

.2 the influence of the design and development of cities, past and present on the contemporary built environment;

.3 current planning policy and development control legislation, including social, environmental and economic aspects, and the relevance of these to design development.

GC5 Understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings

and the spaces between them to human needs and scale.

GC5 The graduate will have an understanding of:

.1 the needs and aspirations of building users;

.2 the impact of buildings on the environment, and the precepts of sustainable design;

.3 the way in which buildings fit into their local context.

GC6 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.

GC6 The graduate will have an understanding of:

.1 the nature of professionalism and the duties and responsibilities of architects to clients, building users, constructors, co-professionals and the wider society;

.2 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;

.3 the potential impact of building projects on existing and proposed communities.

GC7 Understanding of the methods of investigation and preparation of the brief for a design project

GC7 The graduate will have an understanding of:

.1 the need to critically review precedents relevant to the function, organisation and technological strategy of design proposals;

.2 the need to appraise and prepare building briefs of diverse scales and types, to define client and user requirements and their appropriateness to site and context;

.3 the contributions of architects and co-professionals to the formulation of the brief, and the methods of investigation used in its preparation.

GC8 Understanding of the structural design, constructional and engineering problems associated with building design.

GC8 The graduate will have an understanding of:

.1 the investigation, critical appraisal and selection of alternative structural, constructional and material systems relevant to architectural design;

.2 strategies for building construction, and ability to integrate knowledge of structural principles and construction techniques;

.3 the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, components and systems, and the environmental impact of specification choices.

GC9 Adequate knowledge of physical problems and technologies and the function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate.

GC9 The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 principles associated with designing optimum visual, thermal and acoustic environments;

.2 systems for environmental comfort realised within relevant precepts of sustainable design;

.3 strategies for building services, and ability to integrate these in a design project.

GC10 The necessary design skills to meet building users' requirements within the constraints imposed by cost factors and building regulations.

GC10 The graduate will have the skills to:

.1 critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, constructional systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design;

.2 understand the cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project;

.3 prepare designs that will meet building users' requirements and comply with UK legislation, appropriate performance standards and health and safety requirements.

GC11 Adequate knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall planning.

GC11 The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 the fundamental legal, professional and statutory responsibilities of the architect, and the 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;

.2 the professional inter-relationships of individuals and organisations involved in procuring and delivering architectural projects, and how these are defined through contractual and organisational structures;

.3 the basic management theories and business principles related to running both an architects' practice and architectural projects, recognising current and emerging trends in the construction industry.

Programme philosophy and aims

The MArch views the City as a laboratory, the studio is a research tool to develop and test possible iterations of sustainable urban futures, an exploratory bridge between theory and practice.

The MArch meets and exceeds the requirements set out in the latest ARB/RIBA Part 2 criteria and EU Directive on Architectural education.

The programme enables the development of an understanding of the theoretical, technical and professional issues informing contemporary architectural practice, focusing on the contemporary city, a laboratory for the exploration of possible forms of architectural production. The programme explores the limits of contemporary practice and engages in cross-disciplinary dialogue and practice.

The programme is driven by the School's research agenda. Students identify their trajectory through the programme to develop individually focused projects within shared vehicles and fields of operation that engage with and are informed by the School's leading edge research practice.

The intersection between the disciplinary aspects of architecture and professionalism underpin the programme. Through testing the definition of architectural production students develop professional skills that deepen and extend knowledge and understanding of areas of practice.

The aims of the programme are to:

- Align with the School's new manifesto and philosophy.
- To acknowledge the new RIBA/ARB professional body criteria (incorporating the new EU Directives for Post Graduate Architecture courses) to ensure that graduates obtain RIBA Part 2 exemption in preparation for a professional career in Architecture.
- To provide students with a curriculum which goes 'beyond' the professional body criteria, providing a dynamic and stimulating learning experience within which individual career paths and ambitions can be addressed.
- To create a learning environment that is both integrated and equitable for Full Time and Part Time students and one which recognises and pre-empts the possible disparities.
- Provide a number of projects that encourage deep learning and professional competency, commensurate with the professional status of being an Architect.
- Provide a flexible framework of modules which allow 'one-off' / spontaneous opportunities such as design competitions or research projects to be properly accommodated into the programme to facilitate a student's individual career path.
- Provide a framework for a more explicit link between the School's research activities and the MArch projects and dissertations.

- Continue strong links with professional practice to ensure graduate employability and to support the local architectural profession.

- Continue strong relationships between staff and students and the highest level of teaching and support to maintain the programme's reputation for 'added value'.

Intended learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated:

Learning Outcomes

The following are the RIBA Graduate Attributes for Part 2 along with a description of where and how these criteria are met.
(For specific learning outcomes refer to the module descriptors)

1 ability to generate complex design proposals showing understanding of current architectural issues, originality in the application of subject knowledge and, where appropriate, to test new hypotheses and speculations;

Throughout the programme students are engaged in complex design proposals of different scales and against different agendas. “Critical Urbanism” will encourage an open investigation at an urban scale, whilst “Architectural Synergies” will involve a more detailed and technical consideration. “Architectural Speculations” provides the opportunity to test a hypothesis that will be derived from the students’ research work and Dissertation. The “Research & Theory” module includes a lecture programme covering current architectural issues which will cross reference to the students’ design work.

2 ability to evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals;

All modules and projects require a professional level of communication commensurate with the Architectural profession which includes work which is analytical, illustrative, technical, and written. “Communication” is used in conjunction with the word “Presentation” as students need to produce a portfolio of work that is both graphically strong and communicative. Students also verbally present all design work on numerous occasions through the modules. “Architectural Speculations” includes a ‘design report’ to ensure that students are linking their theory with their design work, and “Architectural Speculations: Tectonics” includes a written technical report.

3 ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals;

The programme designates 25% of its content to technical and professional matters and half of this is specifically deployed for students to consider technology and environment. “Architectural Synergies” is specifically designed to promote the inextricable link between design and technology and working with other construction professionals to ensure that professional issues and technical proposals are fully integrated. It encourages the investigation of technologies as an enhancement of the design process. Student-led technical seminars investigate the potential of materials, innovative construction, and contemporary environmental systems.

The technical report in “Architectural Speculations: Tectonics” requires students to produce reference to precedents and directed research in this area rather than an acceptance of standard solutions, generating a technical curiosity. Making will be used as a means of exploring different approaches to construction and environment. The routine use of the BIAD workshops offers significant opportunities to students in this subject area.

The “Management Practice & Law: Applied” module considers “practicable design proposals” in different terms by addressing issues such as planning, construction law, risk assessments, and procurement via the vehicle of the “Architectural Synergies” design project.

4 critical understanding of how knowledge is advanced through research to produce clear, logically argued and original written work relating to architectural culture, theory and design;

The module “Research & Theory” specifically addresses how research and theory relate to design and practice. A history and theory lecture programme will provide a context to the module; whilst a series of seminars delivered by research active staff will demonstrate how research and practice can be linked, culminating in a “Plan for Research”. Students will select Dissertation topics from the areas of staff research. The 12,000 words “Dissertation” will set the agenda for the thesis project, “Architectural Speculations”, part one of which includes a Design Report to test and ensure that the theoretical agenda of the Dissertation is indeed being addressed in the design project.

In addition, the two “Management Practice & Law” modules offer the opportunity for further exploration via original written work, including the provision of an open book examination.

5 understanding of the context of the architect and the construction industry, including the architect’s role in the processes of procurement and building production, and under legislation;

The programme includes two modules in Management Practice & Law (MP&L: Theory and MPL&L: Applied), one focused on the theoretical aspects (in effect, pre-contract issues) and the other utilises the “Architectural Synergies” design project as a vehicle to address post contract issues such as procurement. The modules include an understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, setting up in practice, planning law, the construction industry, cost control, health and safety, building regulations, construction and property law, contract law, standard forms of appointment, and the management of practice. These areas are taught and assessed across the two modules and in various formats, including an ‘open book’ examination (in preparation for the Part 3 course format) and a ‘technical report’ which cross references to the aforementioned “Architectural Synergies” design project.

6 problem solving skills, professional judgement, and ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances; and

The programme is predicated on the concept of deep learning with students taking ownership of all design projects and modules by the nature of the project briefs, timetabling, and teaching and learning strategies. The nature of architectural design and its iterative process means that judgement is a key attribute and the ability to make timely and informed decisions in projects which have many variable factors is fundamental to successful progress. Professional judgement is also promoted via the number of self-led modules on the programme such as the Elective, and also through the Management Practice & Law modules that address the professional context.

7 ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect.

The programme requires all applicants to submit a self-appraisal at the interview stage as part of the admissions process. Students are asked to identify their strengths and weaknesses and also areas of study they are particularly interested in as a means of defining a career path. The vast majority of modules in the programme have significant elements of choice to allow students to meet their own learning needs.

This element of self-direction is continued in the module “Research & Theory” with the student preparing a “Plan for Research” to act as a career path guide through the remainder of the programme.

The tutorial and design review process is also a key factor in the area of personal responsibility. Students are ‘coached’ rather than ‘taught’ at Level 7 and therefore it is important for students to ensure that their needs and queries are met and discussed in one to one design tutorials.

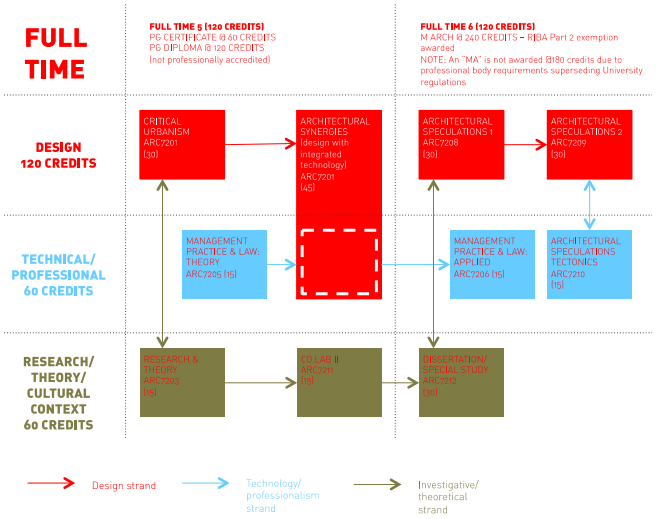
The “Management Practice & Law” modules specifically address the roles and responsibilities of the Architect in society in accordance with the ARB/RIBA criteria.

Learning teaching, and assessment methods used

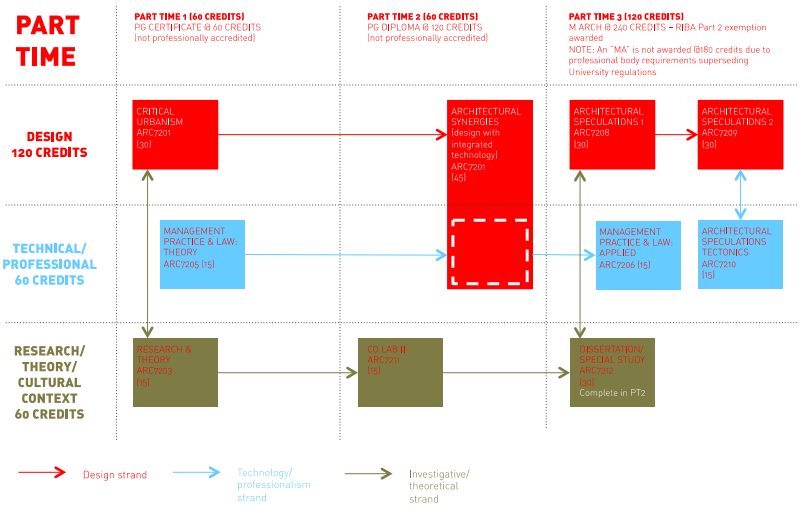
Learning and Teaching:
- one to one design tutorials
- group tutorials
- formative design reviews
- summative design reviews
- formal lectures
- student presentations
- seminar groups
- interactive workshop sessions
- class exercises
- ‘open book’ examination
- resource based learning (readers etc)
- PDP or RIBA CPD log
- technical workshop work and demonstrations

Assessment Methods:
- formative design reviews
- summative design crits
- submission of drawing packages
- presentations / seminars
- written dissertation
- design reports
- technical reports
- open book examination
- essays
- PDP or RIBA CPD log

Programme structure and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards



MArch Programme Diagram
Birmingham School of Architecture



MArch Programme Diagram
Birmingham School of Architecture

Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)

The professional body criteria specifically refer to the "ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect." (Graduate Attributes GA2.7)

In response to this, there are specific points in the programme in which self-direction and reflection are critical.

The "Plan for Research" career path document within the "Research & Theory" module formalises the identification of individual learning needs.

Part Time students are required to continue to log their professional experience in their Professional Education and Development Resource (PEDR), and they meet periodically with the School's Practical Training Adviser to discuss and sign off their PEDR logbook. Full Time students record their development on the RIBA's CPD (Continual Professional Development) On-line Log. Both modes of students are assessed for PDP within the Management Practice & Law modules.

Students are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on their own learning needs from as early as the admission interview, and are offered the following support as appropriate to meet those needs:

- design and personal tutors
- access to additional tutorial support from the Programme Director
- pastoral care from the Programme Director
- Moodle
- a series of social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter)
- technical workshops and technician support
- opportunities to contribute to the School's BA programme via studio teaching
- opportunities to contribute to the School's research profile
- library facilities and on-line resources

Criteria for admission

Candidates must satisfy the general admission requirements of the programme.

The current admission requirements can be found under the 'Entry Requirements' tab of the web page for this course.

Methods for evaluation and enhancement of quality and standards including listening and responding to views of students

- Programme team meetings
- Boards of Studies
- PG Course Director's Forum
- Examination Board
- Faculty Academic
- Sub committees
- Faculty Board

- Review and validation events
- Accreditation / Validation by professional bodies (ARB/RIBA)
- Annual Monitoring Report
- Student module feedback forms
- External Examiners Reports
- Programme team meetings
- Academic planning