Programme Specification: Architecture and Design Foundation Year

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Course record information

Name and level of final award	- Bachelor of Arts with Honours - Architecture - Bachelor of Arts with Honours - Urban Planning and Design - Bachelor of Arts with Honours - Interior Architecture - Bachelor of Science with Honours - Architectural Technology - Bachelor of Science with Honours - Architecture and Environmental Design The award is Bologna FQ-EHEA first cycle degree or diploma compatible
Name and level of intermediate awards	Foundation Certificate (Fdn Cert) - Architecture and Design
Awarding body/institution	University of Westminster
Teaching institution	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution	Recognised Body
Location of delivery	Primary: Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
QAA subject benchmarking group(s)	Architecture, Architectural Technology, Art and Design, Town and Country Planning https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
Professional statutory or regulatory body	On completion of honours degree: RTPI (BA Urban Planning and Design) RIBA (BSc Architecture and Environmental Design and BA Architecture) CIAT, CIOB and CABE (BSc Architectural Technology)
Westminster course title, mode of attendance and standard length	- BA Architecture FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length - BA Urban Planning and Design FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length - BA Interior Architecture FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length - BSc Architectural Technology FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length - BSc Architecture and Environmental Design FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length

Valid for cohorts	From 2025/6

Additional Course Information

For the rest of the course structure please check the relevant degree programme specification. This will contain levels 4-6 (year 2, 3 and 4) of the course structure, as well as further information on the full course.

Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum entry requirements for all undergraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information. For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/how-to-apply

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants with prior certificated or experiential learning at the same level of the qualification for which they wish to apply are advised to visit the following page for further information:

https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/guides-and-policies/student-matters/recognition-of-prior-learning

Aims of the programme

The Foundation Year is ideal for students who already hold Level 3 qualifications but have not studied art and design and, therefore, do not have the required level of creative skills for a degree in the field of architecture.

The course offers insights into the range of career options in the field of architecture so is also a great choice for the student unsure of which degree path to select.

The course supports students to:

- Build core practical and academic skills needed for further study in the field.

- Gain insights into role of ideas and theories in the field of architecture and design of the built environment.

- Draw on their own strengths, interests and background experiences, explore the range of career options and make informed decisions on further study.

- Develop a portfolio of creative and academic work to showcase their skills and abilities.

The Foundation prepares students for progression onto one of following undergraduate courses: BA Architecture, BA Urban Planning and Design, BA Interior Architecture, BSc Architectural Technology, BSc Architecture with Environmental Design. In addition, it will encourage exploration of the wider opportunities offered in the built environment field, thus allowing students to reappraise their original progression route and transfer to another course (subject to achievement in that specialist module). Students should discuss course transfer plans with the Course Leader and Student Finance as this may impact on their existing Loan arrangements.

The Foundation year follows the Westminster Foundation Pathway model, with two modules offered by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching Innovation (CETI), and four subject area modules offered by the School of Architecture and Cities. Whilst these specialist subject area modules emphasise building fundamental skills in creative practice, each offers a focus on one of the key disciplines of urban design and planning; architectural technologies, materials and construction; and architecture and interior design.

The foundation year has been designed to:

- Nurture creative practices essential to further study in the field of architecture and design.

- Develop an understanding of the technical knowledge required for design and construction of the built environment.

- Provide insights into the field of past and current ideas and debates that have shaped practice.

- Support the development of critical thinking and writing skills necessary for degree study.

- Build basic skills in communicating design ideas through visual and physical media, and through oral presentation.

- Explore the social and ethical and environmental questions involved in the design of the built environment.

- Introduce the range of professional practices in architecture and the design of the built environment.
- Support reflection on learning and the making of future study choices.

Climate Change

The Foundation in Architecture and Design introduces students to connections between Climate Change and our built environment. They learn about concepts of embodied energy and energy-in-use, and the environmental impact of energy generation. Students are also introduced to current approaches in urban planning to reduce carbon emissions and design for a changing climate. Through their project work, students consider the practical issues of material sourcing, project lifespan, and resource reuse. Students are introduced to the UN Education for Sustainable Development framework and relate their coursework to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Foundation Modules

The four studio-based Foundation modules are R**ecording Place, Making Practices, Reading Spaces and the Major Project.** Each offer project-based learning activities focussed on a particular discipline in the field, drawing on expertise from the School's courses in Interior Architecture and Design, Architectural Technology, Architecture, and Urban Design and Planning. Students will also benefit from the wider culture of the School of Architecture and Cities with its lively programme of open lectures and events.

Through an exploration of their experience of urban spaces the module **Recording Place** introduces students to the social and ethical issues raised through the study of the built environment and provides insights into the role of planners and urban designers in shaping the future cityscape. The module also explores the effect of current urban design policies to address climate change such as carbon emission reduction through modal shift, strategies for improved environmental quality, and design for a changing climate.

In the module **Making Practices**, students develop their understanding of the material and technical aspects of architecture and design through a practical making project based in the Fabrication Lab. module introduces students to the roles of architectural technologists, architects and designers and their part in shaping our built environment. Students explore the impact of buildings on the climate by examining the energy needed to build and run the buildings and spaces we inhabit and the sources of this energy. Concepts of embodied energy, materials sourcing, reuse, and recycling are explored through practical making and crafting.

The **Reading Spaces** module focuses on the experience of architecture and involves the analysis and creative transformation of existing spaces and the role of light and material in the experience of the architectural space. The module introduces the important concept of adaptive reuse both from an embodied energy and cultural value perspective.

The final studio-based module, the **Major Project**, is a design challenge that asks students to draw on skills and interests ignited by their earlier studio-based work and topics explored in the Foundation Pathway Modules. The work from this project forms the centrepiece of the final exhibition showcasing the students' skills and creative visions. The project introduces thinking about material choices and lifespan from a carbon impact perspective.

Students also take two Foundation Pathway modules, **Introduction to Academic Practice (IAP)** and **Critical Thinking for Academic and Professional Development (CTAPD)**. In the IAP module, students learn academic, professional, and personal skills necessary for success at university, such as researching, writing, referencing, and time management. In CTAPD students explore the importance and role of critical thinking at university and within the architectural profession. Students' critical thinking skills are enhanced through the examination of real-world problems, such as barriers to accessibility in the public realm and the housing crisis. In both modules, students continue to develop their written and spoken communication skills through informal and formal writing exercises and presentations.

Employment and further study opportunities

University of Westminster graduates will be able to demonstrate the following five Graduate Attributes:

- Critical and creative thinkers
- Literate and effective communicator
- Entrepreneurial
- Global in outlook and engaged in communities
- Social, ethically and environmentally aware

University of Westminster courses capitalise on the benefits that London as a global city and as a major creative, intellectual and technology hub has to offer for the learning environment and experience of our students.

Creative and critical thinking is central to the Foundation's studio-based design modules. Students learn about the collaborative nature of design and begin to develop their creativity in responding to practical problems and scenarios in the built environment. They are also introduced to the role of critical thinking in analysing and evaluating creative practice. Students are introduced to these skills through the design process, a form of creative working that involves both intuitive and rational analytical skills and combines creative and critical thinking.

Literate and effective communication skills are key to the practice of design in the built environment. This takes the form of drawing and visual information as well as oral and written communication. The Foundation lays the building blocks for these through the development of hand-drawing skills and the use of digital presentation software. The presentation of design work through the student presentation (crit) format emulates professional practice contexts that involve communication to external audiences. The Introduction to Academic Practice and Critical Thinking for Academic and Professional Development modules support students' capacities to communicate through dialogue, oral presentation and critical writing.

Practitioners in the field of design, architecture, and planning reflect many characteristics of entrepreneurship, and value creativity in initiating, identifying, and responding to practical opportunities. The Foundation design studio encourages creative and inventive approaches grounded in personal investment and values the prior knowledge and interests of its students. Studio teaching is organised on a similar basis to the Pathway Degree courses with design taught in small studio groups to encourage open-ended learning and student-initiated opportunities.

The Foundation introduces students to the global context of creative practice and its architectural and urban traditions and recognises that cultural values and diversity should be central to engaging with built environment users and their communities. Site visits and tours introduce give direct experience of this wider context, and studio-based projects encourage students to engage with their own values, knowledge, and interests.

Foundation students are introduced to the ethical issues involved in the design of the built environment and the ethical codes guiding professional practice. They learn about the impact of the built environment on climate change and the value of sustainable design.

Foundation students will be encouraged to attend the School of Architecture and Cities programme of open lectures delivered by leading practitioners in the field. Each studio-based module focuses on a different vocation in the field and involves contact with industry professionals through practice visits, talks and site tours, enabling students to gain insights into the range of potential career routes and develop their professional network. Presentations (crits) take place twice a semester and involve students discussing their project work with invited practitioners and teaching staff. The students develop confidence and proficiency in discussing their creative ideas and a growing capacity to articulate professional values and knowledge. At the end of the Foundation year, students present their final project work both online and through an exhibition, a formal public event to which practice professionals, alumni and academics are invited.

The Foundation Year aims to create students who able to have the necessary creative capacities and technical knowledge for further study. It supports students in reflecting on their abilities and interests and exploring the range of study opportunities and career routes in order to make the appropriate further study choices.

Students on the Foundation Year will be progressing onto highly vocational degree courses: each one offering a comprehensive engagement with industry professionals through student presentations (crits), workshops and lectures, site visits, employability events and work experience. Central to all the courses is a project-based learning approach that emulates the real-world scenarios and challenges faced in professional practice.

What will you be expected to achieve?

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These are

threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

- The overall knowledge and understanding you will gain from your course (KU)

- Graduate attributes are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA)

- Professional and personal practice learning outcomes are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP)

- Key transferable skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course. (KTS)

Level 3 course learning outcomes: upon completion of Level 3 you will be able to:

- L3.1 Design Practices: Design propositional work using imaginative, creative and critical practices. (PPP KTS CS)

- L3.2 Technical Knowledge: Identify the range of materials and construction processes and techniques used in making buildings and spaces (KU GA CS)

- L3.3 History, Theory and Urban Design Knowledge: Relate architectural history and ideas to the analysis of existing buildings, places and spaces (KU)

- L3.4 Critical Thinking and Research: Outline evidence, arguments and assumptions that shape the discourse of design, architecture and the built environment (KU GA CS)

- L3.5 Communication: Communicate creative responses and ideas through visual and physical media, and through oral presentation (GA PPP KTS)

- L3.6 Reflective Practice/Learning Needs: Discuss your individual learning needs and responsibilities and explore your academic interests in the context of course study options (GA CS)

- L3.7 Addressing Climate Change: Outline the causes of climate change, the impact on our environment and the responses by designers and architects (KU GA CS)

- L3.8 Professional Practice Knowledge: Reflect on your own career decisions informed by a knowledge of the range of creative professionals involved in shaping the design of the built environment (PPP CS)

How will you learn?

Learning methods

Studio based modules: Students learn and progress by attending tutor guided studio sessions that support the development design project work. This involves learning to conceptualise, make creative proposals and evaluate them using drawing, making and other creative media. Students learn to respond to the critical appraisal of their work in tutorials and crits (formative assessment), research and integrate ideas and peer and tutor led studio investigations and discussions. Students are encouraged to use creative approaches supported by iterative design processes using a wide range of media. Students are also encouraged to reflect on their own knowledge and experience of architecture and design and draw on it in shaping their creative work.

To support progress in their design project work, students keep a **Sketchbook** of exploratory process and development work. The sketchbook provides a space for recording building and exhibition visits, experimenting with new media and practicing techniques and skills. Reflecting established practices in the field, the Sketchbook records unfolding progress and is a key element in nurturing creative thinking.

Students take records of their presentations (crits) and the feedback given, and include them in a reflective **Journal**, submitted at the end of each module.

Westminster Foundation Pathway modules: Students learn by attending weekly lectures and follow-up seminars delivered in person on-site. The seminars are relaxed interactive teaching sessions delivered in smaller groups. The seminars support group discussion of set texts, case studies and media, allowing for students to explore their own perspectives.

Teaching methods

Studio-based modules: The Studio-based modules will be delivered at the Marylebone Campus from a dedicated Foundation space, thus giving students the opportunity to drop in to presentations, open lectures and events run by the School of Architecture and Cities. Design is taught through studio discussions, seminars, individual and group tutorials, and workshops, all focused on supporting students with the development of their project work. Each module is set within a subject focussed scenario and involves a series of briefs or challenges out of which students pursue creative responses. Tutors guide and support students' progress with skills workshops, talks and visits. The process of developing work involves both knowledge building and the development of formative ideas. Feedback is the primary teaching method, encouraging further design development leading to final outcomes.

Practical workshops introduce basic skills in observational drawing, modelling, making and prototyping. Studio teaching is supported with Blackboard, the online teaching platform: Talks and demonstrations where possible are recorded and available for asynchronous viewing, together with other supporting resources. Weekly open lectures run by the School provide a welcoming forum for Foundation Year students to interact with students from years and courses. Teaching is enriched with studio visits to urban spaces, buildings, interiors, and exhibitions. Crits or reviews involve discussion and feedback at interim and final stages of project work: these combine focused teaching input with formative assessment of student work. In addition to learning drawing and digital presentation skills students will receive on-line and hands-on skills training in the use Fabrication Lab equipment, enabling them to explore creative ideas in material form. The module Making Practices develops the students' practical skills through a material or technical challenge with making and construction as the main focus.

Westminster Foundation Pathway modules: Students are taught through weekly lectures with follow-up workshops. The lectures involve presentations by academic staff and may involve an interactive and/or 'blended learning' element. The lectures focus on the development of critical thinking through the presentation of case studies, whilst the follow-up workshops, led by specialist tutors from the field of architecture, design and planning, encourage informed exploration and discussion of the issues raised.

Assessment methods

Studio based modules: The Foundation Year offers a variety of assessment methods that aim to foster creative and critical thinking and to support students' academic development. Student presentations (crits), sketchbooks and portfolios are widely used assessment approaches in the discipline and also reflect professional working practices in the field. Central to design-studio based teaching is the use of formative assessment (assessment for learning) in the form student presentations (crits). These involve students presenting their ongoing work to academics and visiting practitioners in a nurturing and informal environment. The process is designed to be as inclusive as possible to ensure all students are treated fairly, whilst also preparing them for future study and professional development.

At the crits, students receive constructive verbal feedback and guidance with the aim of supporting the further progress and refinement of their work. Each module involves two stages of formative feedback in the form of interim and final presentations. Summative or final assessment takes place at the end of each module and involves the submission of three elements: a **Portfolio or Final Project, the Sketchbook** and the **Journal**.

The **Portfolio** or **Final Project** includes a selected summary of the creative work done for the module and includes a range drawings, models and other creative work.

The **Sketchboo**k is an ongoing workbook used to record observational drawing studies, skills workshops and the development of creative ideas.

The **Journal** comprises a record of the students' presentations (crits) and the feedback given by tutors and visiting critics, an account of the learning achieved over the course of the module, and a reflection on how these relate to the students' prior knowledge interests and values.

Westminster Foundation Pathway modules: The core modules Introduction to Academic Practice and Critical Thinking for Academic and Professional Development make use of a range of written and visual material to support the development of the key transferable skills required for success and achievement in Higher Education.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

The course has been designed to empower students by nurturing their core design skills and engaging them in creative practice grounded in their own experiences.

The course supports students' learning through:

- A range of assessment methods.
- Use of formative assessment to identify specific learning needs and signpost additional support where needed.

The course offers a diverse curriculum with:

- a wide range of voices and narratives in the reading lists and other study materials.
- seminars offering spaces of dialogue where students are invited to contribute.

The course fosters learning that builds on students' prior knowledge, insights and interests through:

- projects that encourage students to value their lived experiences and knowledge of communities and develop their own ideas through creative practice.
- reflective writing.
- opportunities to discuss future study plans and career aspirations in light of progress and achievements.

The course offers opportunities for collaborative learning through:

- an emphasis on process and individual contribution.
- the celebration of different perspectives.

Graduate Attribute	Evident in Course Outcomes
Critical and creative thinker	L3.1, L3.3, L3.4, L3.8
Literate and effective communicator	L3.5, L3.6
Entrepreneurial	L3.1, L3.5
Global in outlook and engaged in communities	L3.1, L3.3, L3.4
Socially, ethically and environmentally aware	L3.1, L3.2, L3.3, L3.4, L3.7, L3.8

Course Structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Undergraduate students study 120 credits per year. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

Modules are described as:

- **Core** modules are compulsory and must be undertaken by all students on the course.

- **Option** modules give you a choice of modules and are normally related to your subject area.

- **Electives**: are modules from across the either the whole University or your College. Such modules allow you to broaden your academic experience. For example, where electives are indicated you may choose to commence the study of a foreign language alongside your course modules (and take this through to the final year), thereby adding further value to your degree.

- Additional information may also be included above each level for example where you must choose one of two specific modules.

Modules

Level 3

Module Code	Module Title	Status	UK credit	ECTS
3ACHE004W	Critical Thinking for Academic and Professional Development	Core	20	10
3ACHE003W	Introduction to Academic Practice	Core	20	10
3ARCH004W	Major Project	Core	20	10
3ARCH002W	Making Practices	Core	20	10
3ARCH003W	Reading Spaces	Core	20	10
3ARCH001W	Recording Place	Core	20	10

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. In addition, timetabling and limited spaces may mean you cannot register for your first choice of option modules.

Professional body accreditation or other external references

The Foundation is part of the following extended degree qualifications covered by professional body accreditation/validation.

BA Urban Planning and Design, accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

BSc Architectural Technology, accredited by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE).

BSc Architecture and Environmental Design and BA Architecture, validated by the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA). Graduates of the BSc Architecture and Environmental Design and BA Architecture courses will no longer be accredited by the Architects Registration Board (ARB) at Part 1 level. ARB has revised its requirements and will no longer prescribe undergraduate qualifications after December 31, 2027. Students starting this course from September 2025 onwards will finish the course after this date, meaning their degree won't be ARB-prescribed. However, this will not affect their ability to qualify as a UK architect, as the ARB will continue accrediting master's level qualifications.

Course management

The management structure supporting the course is as follows:

- The Foundation Year Leader is responsible for co-ordinating activities specific to the Foundation Year. These include coordinating studio tutoring and studio facilities; coordinating personal tutoring; general teaching and learning issues and studio-based module leadership; student induction and orientation; admissions and marketing (related to the Foundation Year and extended degrees)
- The Foundation Year Leader liaises with the Course Leaders (of the various degree courses), who are responsible for coordinating the overall management of their courses and the development of the curricula.
- The Head of School, supported by the Assistant Heads of Schools, holds overall responsibility for the courses offered by the School of Architecture and Cities.
- The Head of College holds overall responsibility for the Schools within the College.
- The Head of Personal Tutoring is responsible for coordinating the provision of pastoral care.

Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations.

Course specific regulations apply to some courses.

Academic Support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Campus Registry. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students. Further information on Blackboard can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/your-student-journey/when-you-arrive/blackboard

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Further information on the Academic Learning Development Centre can be found at westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students1 can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their College. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

Support Services

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/student-advice

The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/students-union

How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel. University Panels normally include internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university. a representative from industry and a Student Advisor.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the evidence of student surveys, student progression and achievement and reports from external examiners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and make changes where necessary.

A Course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with revalidation panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Course representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the course representatives.
- There are also School Representatives appointed jointly by the University and the Students' Union who meet with senior School staff to discuss wider issues affecting student experience across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees.;
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate, if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification is supplemented by the Course Handbook, Module proforma and Module Handbooks provided to students. Copyright in this document belongs to the University of Westminster. All rights are reserved. This document is for personal use only and may not be reproduced or used for any other purpose, either in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the University of Westminster. All copies of this document must incorporate this Copyright Notice – 2022©

Additional Details

Condoned credit as detailed in Section 17 of the University regulations, is not available to students on the BA Architecture with Foundation, BSc Architecture and Environmental Design with Foundation and BA Interior Architecture with Foundation courses. Students on these courses must pass all core modules at Level 3 (120 credits) before progressing to Level 4, and all core modules at Level 4(120 credits) before progressing to Level 5.

draft

Published date: 20 February 2025