

Architecture at University

Key issues that will be considered:

- Why take a course in Architecture at Degree level?
- What to expect and consider in the course.
- Where to do it.
- How to prepare for application/course.
- Career paths after an Architecture Degree.

Why do Architecture at Degree Level?

It's a fascinating subject, and if you have the drive and passion to pursue it for three to six years, then I definitely recommend it. Currently it is relatively poorly paid as a profession, however.

Clearly this represents a largely vocational subject, so it is more than just about going on to study something that you find interesting.

More than ever, current trends suggest an architect in today's society needs an awareness of varying cultures, of societies, sociology, religion, ethics, demographics, economics, urban and rural environmental change etc

What can I expect and consider in the course?

Courses will be taught differently at each university, depending on the offered modules, staff faculty and course structure.

Teaching is through seminars (discussion based learning) and lectures. Contact hours vary, but a good deal of independent learning is expected, more than at school. Lots of reading for weekly seminars. Assignments per term generally include long essays, course reading, seminar preparation, group work, presentations and a final year dissertation. With an Architecture Degree, there will be placements and internships, as it were, when you will be affiliated to a firm or practice. More work than at school, but you have better facilities, longer time to complete the work and greater flexibility in dealing with the assignment. More in-depth, lengthy and extensively researched work. Not weekly prep.

Strict deadlines, it's up to you to complete assignments on time, as is up to you to keep up with the course. You will have a tutor and lecturers who will all be happy to help you, but it's not like at school where you have teachers/housemasters on your back. You will also have work set for over the holidays, usually essays. Need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined. Actually use the resources and go to lectures out of your own free will. Not so spoon-fed as at school, not about syllabuses and ticking boxes. University is about independent study, personal development and individual, original work.

Entry Requirements:

Entry Requirements depend on the university. Grade requirements range from A*AA – ABB. This is in conjunction with the presentation of a portfolio of DT or Art work which is, ideally, tailored towards Architecture. Look to newer universities for slightly lower grade requirements. Doing History of Art at school gives you an advantage, you can show that you have already developed the knowledge, skills and intellectual curiosity for the subject of Architecture. Having experience in scholarly essay writing, visual analysis and research will be invaluable in seminar discussions and assignments, meaning you'll find it all much less daunting and be able to take the transition from school to uni in your stride.

As well as good grades you'll need a personal statement that presents you as a unique candidate with a passion for the subject. You have to make sure that you demonstrate your interest and drive, rather than assuming it is understood. Make an impact, discuss how something is pertinent and particular to you and why. Be direct and concise whilst demonstrating your individual character and passion for Architecture.

Practical Art or D.T skills are required, plus an aptitude for ICT, a knowledge of materials through science and a sound aptitude in Maths. Not all institutions insist on Maths as an entry requirement – engineering based courses such as Sheffield will place more emphasis on Maths than, say, UCL, for example, where more emphasis is placed on the portfolio and drawing. Humanities subjects are also accepted.

Where to go to do an Architectural Degree?

Choosing an Architectural course at university is a little more complicated than some subjects, in that each institution has a slightly different bias, as alluded to above.

You need to consider the area/location, kind of university and course offered. I strongly suggest looking at the course structures and visiting universities. When considering a course look at what the emphasis/variety is in terms of modules, whether there are trip/art links/work experience potential, and the cultural features of the area (galleries/art centres). Obviously you'll need to think of geography, go north, south, Scotland? London is really the centre of art world so it's beneficial to have good access to the capital. You need to choose whether to be in a quieter area or an urban city, on a campus or spread through a town, at a small or major university. Course links with a local art gallery /architectural practice are invaluable as study tools/subjects offering constant interaction with real art & architecture in situ, whilst providing possible opportunities for work experience and public talks and exhibitions.

Universities to consider applying to include:

Cambridge

UCL

Nottingham, Bath, Liverpool, Cardiff, Manchester, Edinburgh

Newcastle, Sheffield, Dundee, Oxford Brookes

How to prepare for taking the course at Uni:

Writing a strong personal statement and working to the best of your abilities for your exams.

Organise your portfolio of DT / Art work – seek advice, guidance.

Visit exhibitions and famous landmarks.

Compile an exciting portfolio of photographs of buildings.

Arrange to have a mock interview with your portfolio of work, possibly at CLC

Read important architectural texts and any current reviews in newspapers.

Take a course in the History of Architecture at College or independently.

Improve your ICT skills (CAD / CAM etc)

Travel abroad and visit key buildings, eg. Venice, Rome, Paris, New York, Barcelona, possibly on the back of a Travel Award / Scholarship

Do some relevant work experience – architectural practice, National Trust properties, local sites / conservation projects, buildings‘ trust etc

Where an Architectural Degree could take you Career-wise:

Architectural practice / firm

Building Heritage

Land Management

Estate Agency

Conservationism

Valuations and sales

Interior Design

Marketing and Publicity

Civil Engineering

Publishing

Teaching and Research

Media & Communications

Charities and Public funding projects

Development schemes / housing projects

Journalism / Writing

Eco / environmental projects