



## **Module Specification**

### **Exploratory Design Studio**

Version: 2025-26, v2.0, Approved

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## Part 1: Information

**Module title:** Exploratory Design Studio

**Module code:** UBLL47-30-3

**Level:** Level 6

**For implementation from:** 2025-26

**UWE credit rating:** 30

**ECTS credit rating:** 15

**College:** College of Arts, Technology and Environment

**School:** CATE School of Architecture and Environment

**Partner institutions:** None

**Field:** Architecture and the Built Environment

**Module type:** Module

**Pre-requisites:** None

**Excluded combinations:** None

**Co-requisites:** None

**Continuing professional development:** No

**Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements:** None

## Part 2: Description

**Overview:** This full-semester module develops advanced skills in design and collaboration within the context of real-world issues and professional architectural practice. Students select to work within a choice of interdisciplinary, collaborative think-tanks to develop architectural design solutions that address a complex societal and environmental challenge. Guided by both academic and industry professionals, the studio fosters creativity and critical thinking, helping students produce design proposals rooted in contemporary practice that integrate spatial, environmental,

social, and artistic dimensions with strategic resolution that complements the technical aspects covered in the concurrent Zero Carbon Design & Innovation module.

This studio incorporates RIBA's focus on the social value of architecture (E5) and addresses urban and social challenges through diverse design methodologies (E4). Students engage in human-centred, adaptive design processes that reflect RIBA's emphasis on inclusivity.

**Features:** Collaborative Real-World Focus: Students work on live design challenges developed in collaboration with practice, working alongside academics, stakeholders and industry professionals. They prepare, appraise, and refine an appropriate brief that engages with client, user, site, environmental and contextual requirements, before developing exploratory project agendas and solutions.

Sustainable and Inclusive Design: Projects emphasise long-term social and environmental responsibility through circular thinking, resilience, and inclusive approaches.

Design as research: Think tank briefs are framed as research questions, explored through critical and contextual design inquiry.

**Educational aims:** This module aims to deepen students' architectural design capabilities, focusing on innovative and responsible approaches to real-world issues. By the end of the module, students will:

Develop the collaborative skills necessary to produce a refined architectural design proposal that addresses strategic technical considerations within a sustainable and inclusive framework.

Utilise a range of advanced digital and analogue tools for creating, modelling, and presenting complex design solutions.

Integrate environmental, cultural, and social insights into spatial design, promoting accessible and meaningful user experiences.

Critically analyse architectural precedents and apply them to develop responsive, contextually aware design solutions.

Expand or deepen their specialisation in architectural practice, building on prior knowledge from the Pathway Studio module.

**Outline syllabus:** The syllabus covers essential design principles and fosters a collaborative environment where students tackle complex architectural challenges through rigorous, creative processes.

The Exploratory Design Studio begins with an introduction to the collaborative think-tank model, exploring project briefs developed in partnership with industry professionals and academic staff. These briefs focus on contemporary practice issues such as urban resilience, social inclusivity, and environmental responsibility, emphasising the integration of client and user needs; environmental impact; equality, diversity and inclusion; and societal requirements within each design solution. Students are encouraged to either continue with the specialism they explored in the Pathway Studio or select a new area of focus to broaden their expertise.

In the second phase, students resource, plan, implement and record strategies for integrating the spatial, social, environmental, and aesthetic aspects of design, developing a mutual understanding of constraints and opportunities, immediate and long-term interests and competing project agendas to define desirable and feasible project outcomes. The design work produced in this stage aligns with technical strategies explored in the concurrent Zero Carbon Design & Innovation module, supporting a holistic approach to architectural challenges.

As the module progresses, students delve into human-centred and inclusive design to explore the relationship between people and their built environments, critically evaluating how their designs can be meaningful, adaptable, and attuned to the specific needs of diverse user groups.

Through research techniques including site analysis, precedent evaluation, and

regulatory review, students critically examine how architectural interventions can address real-world issues. Students use these insights to inform their design decisions and enhance contextual understanding in response to client, user, site, environmental and contextual requirements.

### Alignment to ARB Competency Outcomes

The ARB Competency Outcomes listed below are assessed to a passing standard as required under ARB's Accreditation Standard 1.1.

D1: Prepare and present architectural design projects of diverse scale, complexity, and type in a variety of contexts, using a range of media, responding critically to a brief. (Ability)

D2: Prepare, appraise, refine and engage with building briefs of diverse scales and types, accounting for client, user, site, environmental and contextual requirements. (Ability)

RE2: Work with clients and other stakeholders to gain a mutual understanding of constraints and opportunities, identify immediate and long-term interests, set project agendas, define desirable and feasible project outcomes, and develop appropriate briefs for projects. (Understanding)

M10: Resource, plan, implement and record project tasks to achieve stated goals, either individually or within a team. (Understanding)

PE2: Display a committed approach to equity, diversity and inclusion, including in their approach to designing environments and in their relationships with colleagues, employees, clients and communities. (Ability)

## Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

**Teaching and learning methods:** A range of teaching methods ensures that students engage fully with the module's collaborative, real-world design focus:

**Design Studio:** 1-to-1 and group tutorials provide continuous guidance on project development, offering feedback in a collaborative setting, while encouraging both independent exploration and collaboration.

**Workshops with Industry Professionals:** Regular workshops and specialist seminars provide insight into real-world design challenges, offering practical perspectives that inform students' design solutions while simulating industry contexts.

**Collaborative Reviews:** Review sessions offer opportunities for students to present and refine their designs through peer and professional feedback, fostering a collaborative studio environment.

**Module Learning outcomes:** On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

**MO1** Engage with clients, and other stakeholders to develop an appropriate brief and agenda responding to user needs, constraints and opportunities that integrates cultural, environmental, and contextual insights. (Mapped ARB Outcomes: D2, RE2)

**MO2** Integrate cultural, environmental, and contextual knowledge to develop and communicate a complex design proposal that address the needs of clients and users, and the specific requirements of a site and its contexts (Mapped ARB Outcome: D1).

**MO3** Plan, implement, and document architectural project tasks effectively, both independently and collaboratively, to achieve defined goals within time and resource constraints (Mapped ARB Outcome: M10).

**MO4** Apply principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the design of environments and in building respectful, collaborative relationships with colleagues, clients, and communities (Mapped ARB Outcome: PE2).

**Hours to be allocated:** 300

**Contact hours:**

Independent study/self-guided study = 228 hours

Face-to-face learning = 72 hours

**Reading list:** The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/1E573636-3BB3-FA52-A749-426540C4BF13.html?lang=en-GB&login=1) via the following link <https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/1E573636-3BB3-FA52-A749-426540C4BF13.html?lang=en-GB&login=1>

## Part 4: Assessment

**Assessment strategy:** Assessment Type: Portfolio (100%)

**Portfolio Submission:** Students submit a comprehensive portfolio communicating their design process, from research and brief development through to final presentation. The portfolio should demonstrate the student's ability to integrate aesthetic, spatial, environmental, and social considerations into a cohesive design solution that responds to a developed brief. Each stage of the design journey should reflect an understanding of sustainable and inclusive design principles, as well as contextual awareness. As part of the portfolio students produce a critical reflection on their design process and collaboration experience. This focuses on articulating their response to professional responsibilities, environmental and contextual considerations, and principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

**Assessment Objectives:** The portfolio will assess students' ability to prepare and refine an appropriate brief and agenda (D2); understand constraints, opportunities and competing interests (RE2); respond critically through a design proposal that addresses complex, real-world issues (D1); and that is resourced, planned, implemented and documented effectively (M10) using appropriate means of communication. Students are evaluated on their approach to equity, diversity and inclusion in their relationships with colleagues, clients and communities (PE2).

Students must pass both assessments to pass the module. As per UWE Academic Regulations and Programme Specification, the pass mark for each assessment on the module is 40%. As per the ARB requirements compensation and/or

condonement are not permitted for any module that will assess ARB's Outcomes to passing standard.

**Formative Feedback:** Students will receive ongoing feedback during studio reviews and one-on-one tutorials, allowing for iterative development and refinement of their work. Preliminary portfolio reviews will be conducted mid-semester, ensuring students can adjust their projects based on formative insights.

**Resit Assessment:** If required, the resit assessment will follow the same brief and submission format as the main assessment, allowing students to develop and submit a revised portfolio that meets the original assessment objectives.

### **Assessment tasks:**

#### **Portfolio (First Sit)**

Description: Design portfolio

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

#### **Portfolio (Resit)**

Description: Design portfolio

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

## **Part 5: Contributes towards**

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Architecture [Frenchay] MArch 2025-26

Architecture [Frenchay] MArch 2025-26

Architecture {Apprenticeship-UWE}[Frenchay] MArch 2025-26

Architecture [Frenchay] MArch 2025-26

Architecture [Frenchay] MArch 2025-26

Architecture {Apprenticeship-UWE}[Frenchay] MArch 2025-26