Module Specification

Architectural Ethics and Agency

Version: 2025-26, v2.0, Approved

Contents

Part 1: Information

Module title: Architectural Ethics and Agency

Module code: UBLL48-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2025-26

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

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 foundational module introduces students to the architect's role as an ethical agent of change, examining how architectural practice shapes and influences society, communities, and the environment. Through a combination of theoretical frameworks, case studies, and reflective practice, students explore the architect's responsibility to uphold social sustainability, inclusivity, and professional integrity in all aspects of their work. Emphasising alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this module focuses particularly on competencies

related to Professionalism and Ethics. By the module's end, students will be equipped to navigate complexities within the profession, grounded in a commitment to social value, environmental responsibility, and public health and safety. The module aims to give students a grounding in what it means to be an architect, the role of architects in society, the design team and the construction industry, and how they might develop as future practitioners. The module directly supports students in developing the knowledge and understanding required to meet ARB Competency Outcomes related to professionalism, ethics, and societal responsibility.

Students explore different types of architectural practices, examining how diverse pathways (e.g., sustainable design, urban planning) shape the structure and mission of architectural firms. Through case studies, students gain insight into practices that prioritise different agendas, learning how these priorities affect firm culture, project selection, and client relationships.

This module addresses RIBA's focus on ethical practice and the architect's responsibility toward social purpose and public welfare (E2). Students explore the role of the architect in prioritising health, safety, and wellbeing (E1).

Features: Ethics and professionalism focused module: Provides a foundational framework for ethical practice and professional obligations, including the architect's duty to uphold public health, safety, and regulatory standards in accordance with the ARB Competency Outcomes and the Architects Code of Conduct.

Real-World Case Studies: Practical exploration of ethical dilemmas and the impact of design decisions on users, communities, and the environment. Case studies include both traditional and forward-thinking practice models that demonstrate diverse approaches to health, safety, sustainability, and inclusivity.

Alignment with The Architects Code and UN SDG goals: Reinforces professional standards and global sustainability objectives within the architecture field.

Educational aims: The aim of this module is to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of ethical practice and social responsibility in architecture. Students will gain insight into the architect's societal role as a steward of equity, sustainability,

and community well-being. By the end of the module, students will be able to:

Articulate a personal and professional ethical framework for practice.

Recognise the architect's role in promoting social, cultural, and environmental goals.

Critically evaluate architectural decisions for their impact on communities and the environment.

Integrate 'The Architects Code: Standards of Professional Conduct and Practice' into their developing practice, with an emphasis on sustainable and responsible design.

Outline syllabus: Outline Syllabus

This module begins by examining the architect's role as an ethical agent, focusing on the societal and environmental impact of design decisions. Students will explore theory and professional practice, including principles such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, gaining a critical foundation for evaluating architectural ethics.

Students will investigate power dynamics within design, exploring the agency of architects to shape equitable spaces and how design choices can empower or marginalise communities. Key topics include social sustainability, inclusivity, and social value, underscoring the importance of community-centred design in contemporary practice. Students will develop an understanding of equity, accessibility, and inclusivity, learning how to prioritise the needs and well-being of diverse users and communities.

This syllabus also covers the architect's role in fostering social sustainability and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasising objectives like reducing inequalities, promoting sustainable urban environments, and ensuring safe and resilient housing. Through a critical understanding of global sustainability goals, students will establish a framework for aligning their future projects with broader social and environmental imperatives.

Core professional standards are introduced via the Architects Registration Board (ARB) Competency Outcomes, specifically those related to Professionalism and Ethics. These competencies, as well as 'The Architects Code: Standards of Professional Conduct and Practice', emphasise the ethical and, health and safety, and regulatory standards essential for architects, as well as professional responsibility and public accountability.

The syllabus culminates in the analysis of real-world case studies, featuring architectural projects that address ethical issues like environmental justice, housing equity, and public health. These practical examples allow students to identify and analyse these considerations, formulating responsible solutions and understanding the long-term impacts of design decisions on society and the natural environment.

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.

CK2: The role of architects in society, the design team and the construction industry. (Knowledge)

M1: Make use of the principles of sustainable, responsible and ethical practice, and recognise how they relate to running an architect's practice. (Knowledge)

PE1: Recognise the significance of the Architects Code of Conduct, and the need for architects to act always in an ethical and professional manner. (Knowledge)

PE4: Uphold the architect's obligations to the health and safety of the public and building users and building constructors. (Understanding)

PE6: Recognise the responsibilities and duties of care that architects have towards their clients, users, the public and those with whom they work. (Understanding)

PE8: Acknowledge and work within the limits of their competence, expertise, and experience. (Knowledge)

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: This module utilises an interactive, discussion-led approach, incorporating lectures, seminars, and workshops to foster a deep understanding of ethical practice.

Lectures: Provide foundational knowledge in architectural ethics, professional standards, and regulatory requirements, including an in-depth look at The Architects Code with active use of its principles in case-based discussions and ethical scenarios to build familiarity and professional judgement.

Seminars: Students engage in critical discussions, applying ethical theories to case studies and exploring the challenges and responsibilities inherent in architectural practice.

Workshops: Students tackle ethical dilemmas in collaborative settings, applying their understanding of professional standards to practical scenarios. Workshops also focus on strategies for communicating ethical considerations effectively, ensuring clarity and accessibility when discussing values and responsibilities with various stakeholders. Alongside ethical dilemmas, students could participate in workshops on professional competency and goal setting, where they identify areas for improvement in personal development and competency.

Reflective Exercises: Reflection is integrated throughout, encouraging students to examine and articulate their professional values and develop a personal ethical framework. This framework will serve as a foundation for decision-making in their future studies and professional work, fostering awareness of their responsibilities within architectural practice.

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

MO1 Recognise the role of architects in society, including their responsibilities within the design team and construction industry, and of acting ethically in accordance with the Architects Code of Conduct. (Mapped ARB Outcomes: CK2, PE1)

MO2 Demonstrate how sustainable, responsible, and ethical principles inform architectural practice, recognising the architect's duties of care toward clients, users, the public, and collaborators. (Mapped ARB Outcomes: M1, PE6)

MO3 Demonstrate an understanding of the obligations to protect the health and safety of building users, the public, and construction workers, showing how ethical judgement informs professional decision-making. (Mapped ARB Outcomes: PE4)

MO4 Reflect critically on your professional limits, competence, and expertise, evaluating how ethical and regulatory frameworks guide responsible architectural practice. (Mapped ARB Outcomes: PE8)

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Face-to-face learning = 36 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/B5010AF1-51F4-0824-6443-E79B08F767FE.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Reflective Development Report and Professional Development Plan (Pass/Fail)

The work is assessed in a 2000 word (or equivalent) illustrated report.

This assessment fosters meaningful engagement with ethical dilemmas while encouraging students to reflect critically on their professional responsibilities and personal development needs. The report requires students to examine a real or hypothetical architectural dilemma, focusing on ethical judgement, the architect's professional obligations (including health, safety, and welfare), and relevant regulatory frameworks.

The Professional Development Plan requires students to identify gaps in their current level of competence and set clear, actionable goals for growth. This structured reflection develops awareness of the architect's duties to clients, users, collaborators, and the wider public, providing a foundation for continuous development in future modules and practice.

Assessment Objectives:

Students identify a real or hypothetical architectural dilemma and analyse it through the ethical theories and frameworks covered in class. They demonstrate how their decisions reflect responsible, ethical, and professional conduct, in line with the Architects Code of Conduct and recognise their obligations to society, users, and collaborators.

Students develop a reflective plan for professional growth, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in relation to regulatory knowledge, ethical awareness, and practical competency. The plan outlines specific, actionable steps toward becoming a responsible, ethical practitioner who acts within the bounds of their expertise.

As per UWE Academic Regulations and Programme Specification, for a pass/fail module a student must achieve a 'pass' grade to gain the academic credit. 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 Opportunities: Students can discuss an outline of their submission for formative feedback, refining their arguments and perspectives based on instructor

and peer feedback.

Plagiarism Prevention: By focusing on individual, scenario-based reflections and unique ethical analysis, the assessment minimises plagiarism risk, requiring a personal and reflective response.

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 report that meets the original assessment objectives.

Assessment tasks:

Report (First Sit)
Description: Reflective Development Report and Professional Development Plan (2,000 words)
(Pass/Fail assessment)
Weighting: 0 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

Report (Resit)
Description: Reflective Development Report and Professional Development Plan (2,000 words)
(Pass/Fail assessment)
Weighting: 0 %
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