



Module Specification

Critical Architectural Practices

Version: 2025-26, v2.0, Approved

Contents

Module Specification	1
Part 1: Information	2
Part 2: Description	2
Part 3: Teaching and learning methods	5
Part 4: Assessment.....	6
Part 5: Contributes towards	8

Part 1: Information

Module title: Critical Architectural Practices

Module code: UBLL49-15-3

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 complements the key principles introduced in the Architectural Ethics and Agency module, guiding students to critically examine the social, political, cultural and environmental contexts and narratives that shape architectural practices. Through the study of contemporary theory and design approaches students explore a range of contemporary architectural theories and design approaches that inform specialised areas within architecture, encouraging them to understand the multi-dimensional impact of architectural decisions on

society and the environment. By engaging with interdisciplinary research methods, case studies, and critical analysis, students begin to formulate a personal design philosophy that aligns with their professional goals and learn the principles of how to justify design decisions grounded in rigorous research and inquiry.

Students are encouraged to question conventional practices and consider how architecture can address complex societal challenges, including climate change, social inequality, and urban resilience helping to develop the ability to justify their design decisions through strong theoretical foundations and methodologies.

This module aligns with RIBA's emphasis on the social purpose of architecture and the need for ethical design (E2). Students critically assess historical and theoretical foundations of architecture (E4).

Features: Research-driven approach: Emphasises critical inquiry and independent investigation as foundations for architectural inquiry.

Interdisciplinary emphasis: Encourages connections between diverse design approaches, political perspectives, and cultural impacts on architecture.

Educational aims: The aim of this module is to deepen students' critical thinking and analytical skills within the architectural context. Through focused research and reflective practice, students develop a nuanced understanding of how architectural theories and societal influences can shape design outcomes. By the end of the module, students will:

Develop a critical approach to architectural theory that informs their individual design philosophy.

Analyse the role of architecture in addressing complex societal issues and identify how a specialised approach can shape communities and environments.

Cultivate professional communication skills to effectively present design perspectives, preparing them for interdisciplinary collaboration and professional discourse.

Prepare to enter a studio environment with a clearly defined critical viewpoint and a foundation of inquiry.

Outline syllabus: The module begins with an in-depth exploration of architectural theory as it relates to critical architectural practices. Students examine contemporary theories that shape architecture's role within complex social, political, and environmental frameworks, delving into how these theories might inform an emerging architectural interest or specialisation. Emphasis is placed on understanding how diverse global, cultural, and technological factors shape architectural practices, with an emphasis on approaches to social responsibility, inclusivity, and sustainability.

A key aspect of the syllabus is exploring research techniques and critical inquiry methods. Students will engage with a range of research approaches, including case study analysis, precedent evaluation, and evidence-based inquiry. These methods serve as the foundation for developing a personal design philosophy and aligning it with their chosen specialisation. Students will be encouraged to critically analyse significant architectural movements and precedents to see how historical and contemporary theories shape specialised design practices.

Students will investigate the impacts of architectural interventions on communities, examining projects that address societal needs, environmental challenges, and issues of equity and access. The study of real-world applications reinforces the relevance of architectural theory and how design approaches can contribute positively to society. Case studies will include projects from diverse geographic and cultural contexts to illustrate the range of architectural responses to social issues.

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.

CK1: How diverse global, cultural, social, technological, economic factors and

building technology influence aspects of architecture and urban design. (Knowledge)

RE5: Locate and evaluate evidence that may be incomplete or contradictory, critically evaluating the quality of knowledge sources, making judgements and drawing appropriate conclusions that can inform architectural practice. (Ability)

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: To maximise engagement with the module's complex themes, a mix of teaching methods is used, including lectures, seminars, and workshops.

Lectures: Provide students with a critical foundation in architectural theory, presenting key concepts in the context of global social, political, and environmental issues. These sessions highlight research methodologies and approaches that students will use to develop their critical, specialised perspectives. They also introduce students to diverse contextual influences on architecture and explore how theory can inform personal design direction.

Seminars: Foster interactive discussions, allowing students to examine and critique architectural theories and precedents. Seminars are designed to encourage critical engagement and to allow students to articulate and refine their design philosophies in collaboration with peers.

Workshops: Focus on the development of professional communication and presentation skills, ensuring that students can clearly and effectively articulate complex ideas. Workshops will guide students in structuring arguments, using evidence from research, and presenting findings to a professional standard.

Reflective Practice: Reflection is integrated throughout to help students connect theoretical knowledge with their emerging professional identity. Activities focus on

evaluating information, articulating values, and forming a design perspective responsive to societal needs, laying the groundwork for studio specialisation.

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

MO1 Critically analyse how diverse global, cultural, social, technological, economic, and environmental factors influence architectural practices and urban design approaches. (Mapped ARB Outcome: CK1)

MO2 Locate and evaluate diverse and potentially conflicting sources of architectural knowledge, using research methodologies to inform a specialised design perspective and to establish a foundation for specialisation. (Mapped ARB Outcome: RE5)

MO3 Make judgements and draw conclusions about architectural practice and theory, and their societal implications, demonstrating how these inform the development of a personal design philosophy. (Mapped ARB Outcome: RE5)

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](https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/5412C946-9EEC-D160-97AE-BBCAA119A3F9.html) via the following link <https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/5412C946-9EEC-D160-97AE-BBCAA119A3F9.html>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Assessment Type: Critical Design Philosophy and Inquiry Report (Pass/Fail)

This assessment requires students to produce a critically reflective report that synthesises theoretical research, precedent analysis, and contextual understanding. Students must evaluate how global, cultural, social, technological, economic, and

environmental factors shape architectural practice (CK1), and apply critical research methodologies to explore specialised perspectives within architecture (RE5). The report culminates in the articulation of a personal design philosophy grounded in the insights gained. The illustrated report should be a maximum of 2000 words or equivalent.

Assessment Objectives: The report evaluates students' ability to interpret architectural theory and critically examine how diverse global, cultural, social, technological, economic, and environmental factors influence architectural and urban design practices. Students are expected to locate and evaluate contrasting or incomplete sources of architectural knowledge and apply research methodologies to develop a focused and informed design perspective. Additionally, they are required to make reasoned judgements about architecture's role in society and articulate a coherent personal design philosophy that reflects these insights. By framing this assessment as a pass/fail reflective inquiry, the focus remains on genuine engagement and personal insight.

Formative Opportunities: Students will receive feedback on initial ideas to refine their arguments and analytical strategies iteratively.

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.

Plagiarism Prevention: With the unique choice of precedent and the requirement for personal reflection, plagiarism risks are minimised, as each student's report will be uniquely tailored to their specialisation and critical perspectives.

Resit Assessment: If necessary, the resit assessment will follow the same brief and submission requirements as the original assessment, allowing students to develop and submit a revised report that fulfils the original assessment objectives.

Assessment tasks:

Report (First Sit)

Description: Critical Design Philosophy and Inquiry Report (2,000 words) (Pass/Fail assessment)

Weighting: 0 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Report (Resit)

Description: Critical Design Philosophy and Inquiry Report (2,000 words) (Pass/Fail assessment)

Weighting: 0 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

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