



Module Specification

Critical Manifesto

Version: 2026-27, v2.0, Approved

Contents

Module Specification	1
Part 1: Information	2
Part 2: Description	2
Part 3: Teaching and learning methods	6
Part 4: Assessment.....	8
Part 5: Contributes towards	9

Part 1: Information

Module title: Critical Manifesto

Module code: UBLL4C-15-M

Level: Level 7

For implementation from: 2026-27

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 module enables students to develop a critical architectural manifesto that serves both as a self-directed brief and a launch point for their Design Thesis. Through the development of a clearly articulated position grounded in architectural discourse, students define a line of inquiry that can be meaningfully pursued through design-led research. The manifesto and accompanying brief reflect students' critical stance on key global, cultural, social, technological, and environmental questions that inform their developing practice.

The module positions brief writing not as a procedural task but as a method of critical inquiry. Students are guided to construct a design brief that is both aspirational and research-informed, capable of framing a complex design challenge that aligns with their values and ambitions. This brief will become the foundation for their work in the Design Thesis module, ensuring continuity between conceptual development and applied design.

Through a process of reflection, research, and analysis, students develop a framework for understanding their role within both the profession and the broader societal and environmental contexts in which architecture operates. The module encourages students to examine a wide range of contemporary global challenges that intersect with architectural practice, which might include globalisation, climate change, social inequality, racism, identity, intersectionality, and decolonisation. By addressing these topics, students gain a holistic view of architecture's potential to shape and respond to societal shifts and ethical imperatives. This broader perspective supports students in understanding architecture not only as a technical discipline but as a cultural practice with deep societal impact.

Students engage with architectural precedents, urban theory, and interdisciplinary sources to define the context and parameters of their inquiry. Emphasis is placed on the formulation of research questions, theoretical frameworks, and reflective writing that supports the manifesto's clarity and relevance. Visual methods are also explored, ensuring the brief communicates with both academic and professional audiences.

By the end of the module, students will have developed a critically engaged, well-researched, and clearly communicated architectural brief — one that positions them to begin their thesis with intellectual confidence, ethical awareness, and a strong disciplinary foundation.

This module supports RIBA's emphasis on professional ethics, personal integrity (E2) and historical context (E4). Students articulate a personal architectural

philosophy that aligns with RIBA's standards, engaging with contemporary and historical discourses to establish their stance within the profession.

Features: Theoretical and Critical Exploration: Provides a structured environment for students to explore critical debates in architecture, building a foundation for their personal and professional development.

Personal Positioning and Manifesto Development: Supports students in crafting a design manifesto and brief that articulate their architectural values, research focus, and intended area of inquiry, forming the conceptual foundation for the Design Thesis.

Professional Reflection: Encourages students to consider how their architectural perspectives align with social and environmental responsibilities, enhancing their capacity for responsible innovation.

Educational aims: The Critical Manifesto module aims to equip students with the ability to articulate a personal architectural position informed by theoretical, historical, and contextual understanding. The manifesto and accompanying brief serve as a springboard for the Design Thesis, promoting design-led inquiry grounded in reflection, research, and professional values. By the end of the module, students will:

Formulate a critically informed design manifesto that reflects their personal architectural philosophy and responds to wider cultural, environmental, and ethical concerns.

Develop a brief that defines a clear architectural question or area of inquiry, demonstrating an understanding of how architecture operates within broader societal, technological, and global contexts.

Communicate architectural ideas clearly and persuasively, using appropriate media and language to engage academic, professional, and public audiences.

Outline syllabus: The Critical Manifesto module is structured around thematic explorations and skill-building sessions that support students in developing a critically engaged design manifesto and architectural brief. These outputs serve as

the foundation for the forthcoming Design Thesis module.

1. Introduction to Critical Architectural Discourse

Students explore a wide range of architectural theories and critical frameworks, focusing on architecture's role in addressing pressing global, social, and environmental issues. Through readings and seminar discussions, students begin to formulate a personal response to contemporary architectural challenges.

2. Contextual and Historical Analysis

This section examines both historical precedents and current practices to support students in critically evaluating architecture's evolving role.

3. Research Techniques for Architectural Inquiry

Students are introduced to techniques that help them locate, evaluate, and synthesise architectural knowledge. Focus is placed on navigating incomplete or contradictory sources, assessing their quality and relevance, and drawing conclusions that inform a critical architectural stance. These skills underpin the development of a strong design thesis brief.

4. Manifesto and Brief Development

Through tutorials and workshops, students draft a manifesto that articulates their architectural vision, values, and intended area of inquiry. Alongside this, they develop a design thesis brief that outlines a research-led architectural question or provocation. Together, these documents provide a strategic and reflective foundation for the subsequent design studio.

5. Communication of Architectural Vision

Students learn to clearly and professionally communicate their architectural thinking using a range of media. Emphasis is placed on presenting complex ideas to both specialist and non-specialist audiences, with sessions on graphic clarity, written

argumentation, and spoken delivery.

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)

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

RE3: Critically evaluate a diverse range of architectural precedents in order to inform design thinking. (Ability)

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: The module uses a mix of seminars, workshops, and independent research to support the development of a critical, reflective architectural manifesto:

Seminars: Facilitated discussions introduce students to key critical debates and theoretical frameworks, encouraging them to consider their practice within broader architectural contexts.

Workshops: Focused sessions help students develop their manifesto, providing guidance on structuring arguments, developing research, and articulating values

effectively.

Independent Study: Students conduct independent research to explore historical precedents and current trends, building the foundation for their critical manifesto.

Presentation Skills Development: Students practice communicating their architectural values clearly and persuasively, preparing for public and professional engagement.

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

MO1 Articulate a critical manifesto that situates your architectural interests within wider global, cultural, social economic, and environmental contexts, showing how these shape your emerging design ethos and future direction. (Mapped to ARB Outcomes: CK1)

MO2 Formulate a project brief that defines the scope, intentions, and spatial conditions of your proposed thesis, responding to specific client, user, site, environmental, and contextual requirements. (Mapped to ARB Outcomes: D2)

MO3 Develop a design position through a critical reading of architectural precedents, theoretical frameworks, and case studies that substantiate your manifesto's claims. (Mapped to ARB Outcomes: RE3)

MO4 Construct an informed and evidence-based research question that identifies a line of design inquiry, demonstrating critical engagement with diverse and potentially conflicting sources. (Mapped to ARB Outcomes: 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 via the following link

<https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/16CD7DEF-1270-FC7B-6713-84A8740289C4.html>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Personal Critical Manifesto (100%)

The assessment requires students to submit an illustrated manifesto that establishes a critical position and outlines a trajectory for design research in the thesis module. The manifesto should articulate a clear architectural agenda, grounded in global, social, environmental, and contextual awareness. Students are expected to develop a clearly framed research question, critically appraise architectural precedents, and formulate a project brief that reflects spatial, user, and environmental considerations. The submission must be evidence-based, drawing on architectural theory, contextual research, and professional values.

Objectives: This assessment measures the student's ability to critically examine the social, cultural, technological, and environmental contexts that shape architecture. It evaluates their capacity to frame a research question and develop a coherent architectural agenda through a well-defined project brief that responds to client, user, and environmental needs. Students are expected to analyse relevant architectural precedents and theoretical sources to inform their design thinking. The assessment also requires students to synthesise diverse sources of knowledge, make reasoned judgements, and clearly communicate their position through a visually and textually compelling manifesto. Finally, students must demonstrate their ability to formulate a trajectory for design inquiry that is grounded in professional and ethical values.

This assessment demonstrates competency in contextual knowledge (CK1), spatial and environmental brief development (D2), critical engagement with precedents (RE3), and evidence-based architectural judgement (RE5).

As per UWE Academic Regulations and Programme Specification, the pass mark for each assessment on the module is 50%. 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 receive feedback during seminars and workshops, allowing for iterative development and refinement of their critical manifesto.

Resit Assessment: For resit assessments, students will have the opportunity to refine and resubmit their original manifesto, following the same brief and submission guidelines as the main assessment to fully meet the established objectives.

Assessment tasks:**Project (First Sit)**

Description: Personal Critical Manifesto

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4

Project (Resit)

Description: Personal Critical Manifesto

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