Module Specification

Critical Contexts

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Contents

Part 1: Information

Module title: Critical Contexts

Module code: UBLL7T-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2027-28

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 provides students with the opportunity to undertake an independent research project that aligns with their individual interests, professional aspirations, and related Studio projects. It encourages the exploration of architectural, cultural, and technological challenges, offering flexibility in the choice of output format to accommodate diverse learning styles and strengths. Through a structured process of research, critical analysis, and reflective inquiry, students will investigate themes that connect theory with practice. The module emphasises

autonomy, critical thinking, and effective communication, preparing students to articulate their findings in a professional and accessible manner.

This module puts an emphasis on history, theories and methodologies where students critically assess historical and theoretical foundations of architecture.

Features: Independent Research: Supports the development of a focused project reflecting personal and professional interests.

Diverse Outputs: Encourages various formats, such as essays, visual analyses, multimedia, or hybrid projects.

Interdisciplinary Approach: Integrates architectural theory, cultural studies, and technological considerations.

Global Perspective: Explores contemporary architectural discourse through global and inclusive lenses.

Educational aims: This module aims to foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and reflective practice, enabling students to undertake rigorous research that connects theoretical inquiry with architectural practice. By the end of the module, students will:

Formulate a well-defined research focus that reflects their personal interests and aligns with contemporary architectural challenges.

Critically analyse architectural and cultural issues, applying advanced research methodologies.

Communicate their findings effectively, using appropriate media to articulate complex ideas clearly and professionally.

Outline syllabus: The module is structured to guide students through the research process, from defining a focus to producing a well-supported and articulated output. The module begins with lectures and seminars that introduce critical research methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and key themes in architectural inquiry.

Topics include global architectural movements, identity and cultural studies, and intersections between theory and design practice. Case studies of architectural research provide inspiration and demonstrate diverse approaches to connecting theory with practice. Students will work independently to define their research focus, supported by tutorials and formative feedback. This involves framing a research question, identifying relevant methodologies, and situating their inquiry within contemporary architectural discourse. Peer discussions and seminar series provide opportunities for collaborative exploration of themes. In the second phase, students focus on producing their final research output. Workshops on communication techniques support students in refining their projects, whether in written, visual, or multimedia formats. Emphasis is placed on creating a cohesive narrative or argument that integrates research insights and effectively conveys their findings to a professional audience.

In this module the following competencies are met and assessed to passing standard:

How diverse global, cultural, social, technological, economic factors and building technology influence aspects of architecture and urban design.

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.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: The teaching and learning methods for this module are designed to support students in developing an independent and intellectually rigorous research project that reflects the academic standards of the final year of an undergraduate degree. Emphasis is placed on student autonomy while ensuring sufficient structure and guidance through individual and group-based activities.

Introductory Sessions and Framework Development

The module begins with introductory lectures and seminars to outline its structure, requirements, and expectations. These sessions will also provide guidance on identifying and framing research questions, selecting methodologies, and understanding the scope of final-year research.

Individual Tutorials

Each student will be allocated a personal research tutor to provide tailored support throughout the module. Tutorials will offer opportunities for students to discuss their research focus, methodology, and findings in depth, addressing specific challenges and questions as they arise.

Workshops

Workshops will focus on developing key research and communication skills, such as critical reading, academic writing, referencing, and visual storytelling. Additional sessions may include data visualisation, multimedia presentation techniques, and strategies for integrating visual and textual content. These workshops will help students explore diverse forms of communication and equip them with tools to articulate their findings effectively.

Peer Learning and Group Discussions

Group seminars and peer discussions will provide a collaborative learning environment, where students can share insights, critique each other's work, and refine their ideas through feedback. These sessions will focus on fostering a community of learning and encouraging reflective dialogue around key architectural, cultural, and technological themes.

Guided Independent Study

Students are expected to take the lead in shaping their research project, engaging in independent reading, analysis, and development. While tutor support is available, the self-directed nature of the module encourages students to develop initiative, time management, and critical thinking skills.

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

MO1 Formulate a clear and focused research question or thesis that explores architectural, cultural, or technological challenges.

MO2 Apply advanced research methodologies to analyse and interpret architectural and cultural issues critically and creatively.

MO3 Communicate research findings effectively through appropriate media, including correct referencing standards, showcasing clarity, coherence, and professionalism.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 132 hours

Face-to-face learning = 18 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/25BBBE43-0120-EEE4-3C7B-B099B44DCAFD.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Assessment: Research Project (Equivalent to 5000 words)

Content: The Research Project is submitted at the end of the module and represents the culmination of the student's independent research project. This output should be equivalent to approximately 5,000 words but can take diverse forms, such as an extended essay, illustrated report, visual analysis, multimedia presentation, film or a combination of formats. The project must demonstrate a coherent argument, critical analysis, and engagement with architectural discourse while reflecting the student's individual research focus and chosen methods of communication.

Objectives: This assessment evaluates the student's ability to conduct rigorous

research, critically engage with architectural, cultural, or technological challenges, and articulate their findings in a clear and professional manner. Students are expected to integrate theoretical insights into their work, demonstrate creative and intellectual rigor, and use appropriate media to communicate their ideas effectively.

Formative Feedback: Tutorials, interim reviews, and draft submissions provide opportunities for iterative refinement and alignment with module objectives. Regular feedback supports students in developing their research focus, methodology, and final presentation.

Resit will follow the same brief as the first attempt.

Assessment tasks:

Project (First Sit)
Description: Project (Equivalent to 5,000 words)
Weighting: 100 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Project (Resit)
Description: Project (Equivalent to 5,000 words)
Weighting: 100 %
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] BSc (Hons) 2025-26

Architecture and Planning [Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2025-26

Architecture and Environmental Engineering [Frenchay] BEng (Hons) 2025-26