Module Specification

Foundation Design Studio

Version: 2026-27, v2.0, Approved

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Foundation Design Studio

Module code: UBLML7-30-0

Level: Level 3

For implementation from: 2026-27

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 module serves as an introduction to the practice of design, tailored for students with little to no prior experience in the field. It emphasises foundational skills in design thinking, drawing, and model-making, enabling students to develop and refine simple design concepts. Through a series of studio-based projects, students will explore problem-solving scenarios, learning through hands-on experience and iterative processes.

The module places a strong focus on the physical and visual representation of design ideas, including hand-drawing for observation and design, and the creation of physical models to understand space and form.

Teaching methods combine lectures, tutorials, and studio time, encouraging independent learning and the integration of skills acquired from parallel modules. Assessment is project-based, simulating professional practice through presentations, critiques, and submissions of process books and portfolios. The module equips students with essential skills and methodologies to build confidence and competence for advanced design challenges in their academic progression.

Features: Studio-Based Experiential Learning: Encourages learning through iterative project work within a collaborative studio environment, enabling students to test, refine, and communicate design ideas through experimentation and critique.

Analogue Representation and Making: Emphasises the importance of drawing and making as primary modes of enquiry and communication, fostering an understanding of space, form, proportion, and materiality through physical and visual practices.

Reflective and Iterative Design Processes: Supports the development of reflective working methods through sketchbooks, process documentation, and portfolio curation, encouraging students to critically evaluate and refine their design decisions.

Educational aims: The aim of this module is to introduce students to the foundational principles and practices of design through an experiential and studio-based approach. It seeks to cultivate students' ability to conceive, refine, and communicate simple design concepts using elementary drawing, modelling, and observational techniques. By engaging in sequential design projects, students will develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a practical understanding of space, form, and representation. The module also aims to foster collaborative learning, encourage self-reflection through portfolio development, and prepare students for more advanced design challenges in subsequent levels of study.

Outline syllabus: This module recognises that, for almost all the students enrolling, it will be their first experience of the practice of design. As this is so it concentrates on the foundational basics of how to conceive a simple design concept that is refined

and develop through the use of elementary drawing and modelling techniques.

The module is taught as a design studio where a sequential series of design projects are undertaken. Each project formulates a problem-solving scenario that encourages experiential learning by the student and through which key skills are delivered to and applied by them. Projects vary in length although this time-period does not correlate with the assessment value of the project.

Central to the pedagogy of this module is the physical experience of drawing and making representations of design. The exploration and understanding of space and form through physical model-making is held as essential and the use of hand drawing for observation, record and design purposes is understood as paramount. This module aims to equip students with elementary skills in design thinking and drawing which they can apply strategically when progressing to level 1.

Each project is critically reviewed jointly be academics and peers at its point of conclusion and assessment feedback is provided at this juncture. Students are invited to act on this feedback and revise their projects as part of the compilation and curation of their year's work as a portfolio, which is submitted at the formal assessment point for the module. Students are encouraged to make this portfolio a full and comprehensive account of all their work on the module and to this end they are directed to keep sketch books and a 'Working File' - the latter of which catalogues their process of design research and development for each project.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: Teaching and Learning Strategy for this module is studio project based learning in which a topic lecture will introduce the students to the assigned or coming up exercises and/or project which supports and frames their acquisition of topic specific knowledge and skills.

The exercises and projects are designed to facilitate competency acquisition through the didactic and applied learning, building knowledge through the introduction of new

subject matter and reinvestment of gained knowledge and skills. The studio time is designed for the learner to have access to tutorial support, work in the close proximity of classmates and to self-assess his/her progress through the exercises and/or projects.

At times though the year students will be required to pre-read on topics and selected materials, research and orally present on the topic.

Projects and course work is assessed through viva (oral presentations) “pinup” critiques and project demonstrations in front of the students peers and tutors.

Feedback will be in the form of direct verbal and/or written coming from both the tutor(s) and fellow students. Marking criteria and assessment format will be clearly indicated on the Project Brief made accessible to the students at the beginning of each project.

Knowledge and Skills reinvestment from parallel running modules are assessable criteria and essential for progression through the curriculum.

Independent learning: The ethos of studio-based teaching is ‘learning by doing’ and that the assimilation and development of knowledge is achieved through the exploration of design in project work. In support of this pedagogy specific studio time is to be scheduled to run concurrently with the small-group design seminars identified above, so that during scheduled Studio session students are either engaged in a small-group seminar (1 hour) or conducting self-directed learning through design (5- hours). It follows for this Studio-based approach that coursework preparation and the assimilation and development of knowledge are conjoined. Projects are undertaken and submitted throughout the year and the bulk of students’ time will be devoted to this work.

Scheduled learning includes lectures, seminars, tutorials, project supervision, demonstration, practical classes and workshops; fieldwork; external visits; work based learning; supervised time in studio/workshop. Scheduled sessions may vary slightly depending on the module choices you make.

Independent learning includes hours engaged with essential reading, case study preparation, assignment preparation and completion etc.

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

MO1 Develop and use skills in visual, verbal, and physical representation to communicate and justify the design process and architectural ideas, articulating both technical and conceptual aspects effectively.

MO2 Integrate principles of Design Thinking and research methodologies to generate, evaluate, and refine creative design solutions, drawing on relevant information to address technical and contextual challenges.

MO3 Work effectively as part of a team, demonstrating professionalism, organisation, and time management to collaboratively manage group objectives.

Hours to be allocated: 300

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 192 hours

Staff-guided learning = 108 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: The assessment strategy in this module is based upon evaluations of the process and the outcomes of the completed projects. The portfolio is there to support students to reflect on the projects, group working and studio experiences they have experienced on their journey.

To best mimic professional practice the following assessment strategy has been adopted.

Portfolio Summative Assessment: Projects are evaluated on subject specific criteria clearly stated on each project brief at the outset of each project:

Projects are evaluated in both peer critiques and direct submissions. These presentation critiques are held during term time and during the examination period. Typical presentations are 5 to 10 minutes in duration including the formal presentation and feedback from peers and tutors.

Graphic/Written document, which represent and support the verbal presentation and 3D work, consist of student generated and cited graphic images and written content.

Submission of a process book that demonstrates the depth and breadth of research and synthesis in to the iterative process of developing a design concept.

Formative Assessment: Regular “in-process” critiques and one-to-one tutoring is given throughout the development process of the projects. The naturally will include feed on work completed as a group and individually.

Feedback: Peer and tutor feedback is provided during the development process of the projects, during the project critiques.

Resit Portfolio - a similar brief as described above. The module leader may allow either a full re-submission of the portfolio, or an update appendix of a portfolio already submitted, if deemed to be appropriate.

Assessment tasks:

Portfolio (First Sit)
Description: Studio portfolio
(Pass / Fail assessment)
Weighting: 0 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Portfolio (Resit)
Description: Studio portfolio
(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:

Architectural Technology and Design {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Product Design Technology {Foundation} [Frenchay] - Suspended for Sept 2025 BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Product Design {Foundation} [Frenchay] - Suspended for Sept 2025 intake BA (Hons) 2026-27

Architectural Technology and Design {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture {Foundation}[Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Environmental Engineering {Foundation} [Frenchay] BEng (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Planning {Foundation}[Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Planning {Foundation}[Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2026-27

Architectural Technology and Design {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Architectural Technology and Design {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Planning {Foundation}[Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture {Foundation}[Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Environmental Engineering {Foundation} [Frenchay] BEng (Hons) 2026-27