FutureSmartCareers

Architecture

OVERVIEW

Architecture is a broad creative profession with many different roles. In designing the built environment, architects influence the way we use spaces and contribute to sustainable construction practices. The RIBA website demonstrates the many different facets of the career. You can access the website here.

SKILLS

These are as broad as the profession and include creativity, design, numeracy, IT, analytical problem-solving, and communication. These skills can be called upon to varying degrees in the daily responsibilities of an architect. Here is the job profile from Prospects: Architect

Routes to qualification and professional accreditation

There are currently three parts to becoming fully qualified and the whole process takes a minimum of 7 years. This includes 5 years of study and two years of practice. The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is the registering body for the profession, and their student handbook explains the qualification and registration process. Keep up to date with the ARB's latest requirements in their FAQs and glossary for students (handbook is being updated).

Whilst most students go to university, some may opt for a degree-level apprenticeship. The RIBA lists over 50 approved degree courses and apprenticeship programmes in the UK: RIBA Validated schools in the UK

As part of its policy of widening participation, RIBA Studio also runs a practice-based Foundation Programme for students who want to build a portfolio of work and gain practical experience before applying for a Part 1 qualification, click here for more details.

Entry Requirements to degree courses and degree apprenticeships

Whilst all courses listed on the RIBA website are accredited, they vary in their approach to teaching the subject, so it is important to check course content meets your interests and aptitudes.

In general, no specific subjects are required, with only a minority of courses stipulating Maths or Physics A Level. Almost all courses require a digital portfolio of artwork which demonstrates a good sense of design; this could be coursework from A Level Art or Design Technology, or from the student's own work. Some students enter Architecture degree courses from a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design.

Many courses ask for three A Levels, with grades ranging from ABB to A*AA. Many others ask for the equivalent in UCAS Tariff Points, which opens the courses up to BTEC students with DDD and students with a Distinction in T-Level Design, Surveying and Planning. UCAS summarises typical entry requirements here. Explore university websites for grades or go to UCAS here.

In addition to A Levels, students will be required to submit a portfolio of their art and design work. Each university specifies the format and content requirements on their website. In general, imagination, creativity and experimentation are valued, as well as observational drawing and modelling skills. Relevant research and critical reflection in addressing a brief are important, as is clarity in communicating ideas and aims.

Work Experience

Having an idea of the day-to-day work of an architect is important. The first port of call could be an architectural practice near you. Small companies can offer just as valuable an experience as in large companies, and experience in companies in related fields like construction or interior design are also helpful. The University of Portsmouth offers practical advice on finding work experience and work shadowing opportunities here.

The RIBA runs digital work experience for 14–19-year-olds, further details can be found here. They are encouraging employers to take on 50 young people between 28th July to 29th August and have a Work Experience toolkit for employers. Springpod also runs a VIRTUAL Work Experience programme here.

What can it lead to?

Whilst over 70% of students who complete their degree in Architecture go on to become fully qualified members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), others use their qualification as a springboard for other careers. The blend of practical design and analytical problem-solving as well as the communication skills learned on an architectural degree course provide a good grounding for careers in other spheres, here are just a few from Prospects.

Useful websites

Additional reading and study:

The RIBA has an online source of Knowledge and resources.

Podcasts:

About Buildings and Cities

A is for Architecture

Let's Talk Architecture

Webinars:

The RIBA Academy

Resources:

First in Architecture

Architecture Foundation - Museum of Architecture

Architect's Journal

Dezeen