

# School of Architecture

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## Degree Offered

- **Master of Architecture**

The School of Architecture professional curriculum leads to a Master of Architecture degree, a professional degree program in architecture fully accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board. The design studio forms the core of architectural education, and every student makes a significant design studio commitment each semester.

In the United States, most registration boards require a degree from an accredited professional degree program as a prerequisite for licensure. The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which is the sole agency authorized to accredit professional degree programs in architecture offered by institutions with U.S. regional accreditation, recognizes three types of degrees: the Bachelor of Architecture, the Master of Architecture, and the Doctor of Architecture. A program may be granted an eight-year term, an eight-year term with conditions, or a two-year term of continuing accreditation, or a three-year term of initial accreditation, depending on the extent of its conformance with established education standards.

Doctor of Architecture and Master of Architecture degree programs may require a non-accredited undergraduate degree in architecture for admission. However, the non-accredited degree is not, by itself, recognized as an accredited degree.

Montana State University School of Architecture offers the following NAAB-accredited degree program:

### **Master of Architecture (pre-professional degree [126 credits] + 42 graduate credits)**

The next scheduled NAAB-accreditation visit for Montana State University's Master of Architecture degree program will take place in 2031.

The Montana State University School of Architecture received a full 8 year accreditation standard in January 2023.

Students wishing to acquire the Masters of Architecture Degree must complete three semesters of graduate study. Throughout this graduate study, students will choose from a variety of architectural studios, craft studios, architectural seminars, and non-architectural electives intended to emphasize the development of a critical position with regard to the environment and architecture. A comprehensive studio is required that demonstrates, through the development of an architectural project, the student's ability to synthesize their aesthetic, technical and theoretical knowledge. The final design studio in the graduate program consists of a student-directed design project that demonstrates the student's design and research capabilities and explores the student's moral, ethical and aesthetic responsibility to society and the natural world.

Students receiving a Master of Architecture degree from the MSU School of Architecture must have completed a minimum of 168 combined graduate and undergraduate credits—of which a minimum of 42 graduate credits are to be completed at MSU. Students who completed a pre-professional undergraduate degree program at another institution, and completed less than 126 undergraduate credits, will be required to take additional credits at MSU in order to meet the combined graduate and undergraduate 168 credit requirement for graduation.

## School of Architecture Philosophy

The School seeks to prepare students for a lifelong critical engagement in the arts and science of architecture. Located in “the last best place” of the Northern Rockies we are in an extraordinary position to engage questions regarding the relationship between the natural and built environments. As architects, we strive to play an essential and innovative role in enhancing the human condition. To that end, we teach and practice a moral, ethical and aesthetic responsibility to society and the natural world in the design of the built environment. The School of Architecture empowers students to critically engage the complexities of society and the natural environment by instilling the fundamental principles of design and inspiring a spirit of exploration and creative experimentation in shaping the built environment.

It is in our design studios, that this philosophy is most clearly demonstrated. Each studio is conceived to build upon the previous studio in a manner that develops a student's mastery of the science of architecture while at the same time exposing the student to the rich diversity of our faculty's philosophical beliefs. Within a structured sequence of increasingly complex problems, emphasis is placed on teaching both an iterative design process and the visualization skills necessary to demonstrate the resultant design proposals. The science of architecture is continuously evolving and will do so over the life of every architect. We are committed to preparing our students to enter the profession with the contemporary scientific knowledge and emerging technical expertise to further this evolution while at the same time ensuring that our graduates are grounded in the fundamental design thinking, investigative and communication skills that have been central to architecture throughout its history. In addition to the science of architecture we are equally committed to ensuring that our graduates acquire a critical philosophy with which they can engage the design of the built environment.

Knowing how to build is a matter of science and technology but knowing what to build is a question of morality, ethics, and aesthetic responsibility. In this regard the faculty shares a commitment to the stewardship of our environment. This is particularly important in the Northern Rockies where our historic fabric of cities, rural communities and the natural landscape coexist in a tenuous balance. Focusing on the broad principles of creating a sustainable social, cultural, economic and physical environment we utilize the region, from its major cities to its national parks, as the canvas for our teaching, research and creative activities.

As a faculty we are committed to emphasizing the architect's responsibility to create and maintain a sustainable environment formulated from a belief system of moral, ethical and aesthetic theories, but our philosophical beliefs with regard to how this is to be achieved are diverse. This is by intent. Each student, as they matriculate through the design studio sequence, is expected to develop an understanding of the various critical approaches advocated by their professors and ultimately reaches a position of their own. Thus our graduates become empowered to assume a leadership role in the synthesis of the natural environment, human activity and the built environment from a critical, responsible and mature perspective. In doing so, our students discover the commitment of our faculty to both the future of our environment and that of their students. Because of this an extraordinary sense of community emerges within the School of Architecture at Montana State University. Students develop a sense of responsibility not only to the environment and architecture but also to their peers where all share a passion for design.

## Program Requirements

The Master of Architecture professional degree is a Plan B program (professional paper or project plan) that requires forty-two (42) credits of graduate coursework. A student's program of study includes three graduate design studios; Advanced Arch Studio (ARCH 551), Comprehensive

Design Studio (ARCH 558), Masters Studio Project ARCH 560 plus Masters Studio Critique ARCH 561, required advanced theory and systems courses (Advanced Architectural Theory (ARCH 526), Adv Bldg Sys Integration (ARCH 535)), required Professional Paper (ARCH 575), Professional Paper Critique ARCH 577 and 14 credits of approved graduate electives. The M. Arch Program requires a student to successfully complete a Comprehensive Design Studio with a grade of B or better to serve as the comprehensive exam.

## Admission

Admission into the architecture graduate program is competitive. The school is able to admit approximately 60 graduate students per year. All applicants are required to submit undergraduate transcript/s, 3 letters of recommendation and a portfolio of their best work that is reviewed by the school's faculty. For examples of student work and additional application information visit the School of Architecture website at [www.arch.montana.edu](http://www.arch.montana.edu) (<http://www.arch.montana.edu/>).

## Expected Placement for Students with an Undergraduate Degree in an Architecture Related Field, Environmental Design, or Architectural Studies

If an applicant has an undergraduate 4-year degree in architectural studies or environmental design and are admitted to the Master of Architecture program, they will be placed at an appropriate point in the architecture curriculum and can expect to pursue a series of rigorous design studios, specialized courses in advanced architecture, a research paper/project and a student-directed design project in order to be granted the Master of Architecture degree. Students entering with excellent portfolios can expect to complete the Master of Architecture degree in three to four semesters.

## Expected Placement for Students with an Undergraduate Degree in Other Fields

If an applicant has an undergraduate degree in another field and desires to study architecture at Montana State, they will be expected to complete the necessary undergraduate prerequisite Architecture courses prior to being eligible to take graduate level studios. Advanced placement can be made depending on the quality of one's portfolio, which may demonstrate equivalent achievement. The applicant will enroll as a "Second-Degree Student" until the undergraduate prerequisite courses for graduate study have been completed. Upon successful completion of the required prerequisite undergraduate courses, the student will be eligible to apply for admission to the Master of Architecture program. Typically this pathway will take a student 9 semesters to complete all course requirements including undergraduate prerequisite Architecture courses as well as the required graduate courses of the Master of Architecture program. The standard Master of Architecture program is 3 semesters of graduate coursework.

## Required Courses

### Semester I

ARCH 526	Advanced Architectural Theory	3
ARCH 535	Adv Bldg Sys Integration	3
ARCH 558	Comprehensive Design Studio	6
Graduate Electives		3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>15</b>

### Semester II

ARCH 551	Advanced Arch Studio	6
Graduate Electives		6
ARCH 575	Professional Paper	3
ARCH 577	Reader Critique for Professional Paper	1
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>16</b>

### Semester III

Graduate Electives		5
ARCH 560	Masters Studio Project	4
ARCH 561	Design Critique for Master's Studio Project	2
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>11</b>

### Notes:

1. A student must receive a minimum grade of "B" (3.0) in ARCH 575 Professional Paper/Project and a grade of "Pass" in ARCH 577 in order to be able to progress to ARCH 560.
2. All graduate students will be required to receive a minimum grade of "B" (3.0) in any Design Studio (ARCH 558, ARCH 551, ARCH 560). Failure to receive a "B" will result in the student needing to retake that design studio. Additionally a student must receive a grade of "Pass" in ARCH 561 in order to complete the M. Arch degree.
3. M.Arch students are required to complete a minimum of 14 credits of approved graduate elective coursework to fulfill degree requirements. The School of Architecture allows for a maximum of 9 credits to be from outside of the department as long as those courses are shown to have a clear connection to architecture. These credits may be at the 400 or 500 level. A list of approved graduate electives will be provided to students each semester at the time of registration.
4. Per Graduate School policy, a student will have only two opportunities to pass a Masters Studio Project (ARCH 560) similar to a thesis student having only two opportunities to pass the closed door defense and the comprehensive examination.
5. Students may petition the Graduate Program Coordinator to take non-traditional studio classes for application towards graduate elective credit.

All students shall meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator throughout their graduate program to track their progress toward completion of the Master program. The Program of Study will be developed with the Graduate Coordinator and will be submitted to the Graduate School by appropriate deadline. Final approval of the Program of Study rests with the Graduate School. Students may change courses or committee members on the Program of Study by completing a Program Change or Change of Committee form. All Graduate School transfer credit policies apply to M.Arch students.

The student is expected to be familiar with both School of Architecture and The Graduate School degree requirements. Refer to the *For Master's Students* section on The Graduate School website for additional information.

## Financial Assistance

Applicants should contact the director of the school for information regarding the availability of assistantships. See the *Graduate Assistantship* section of the department website for detailed information on appointment criteria.

**Degree Offered**

- Master of Architecture (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/arts-architecture/architecture/master-architecture/>)