



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

# WHAT IS IT LIKE?

at The University of Sheffield School of Architecture





The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.



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# INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed from voices and views gathered from current students, alumni and academic staff from the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield.

The content was designed for prospective and current students of the University of Sheffield School of Architecture (SSoA). Many of the topics explored in this resource relate to the key attributes of the 'Sheffield Graduate' and therefore students from other disciplines may also find it useful.

All of our students have questions and expectations about studying architecture. The aim of this guide is to use the experience of people who have gone before you to help you understand what you might expect at the School and after you leave.

How will I fit in with the younger students?

Mature student

What will be the best way to apply this knowledge when I get home?

International Postgraduate student

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide does not aim to explain everything and it is certainly not a substitute for direct experience; it offers advice and insight to help you prepare for the next stage in your education or to help you reflect on your experience so far.

You can dip in and out or read the whole document. You might want to use it in different ways at different points in your progression.

What will I be expected to already know?

1st Year student

How can I use my work experience?

MArch student

International Postgraduates

Years 2 & 3 Undergraduates

Year 1 & Pre-Arrival Undergraduates

Sheffield School of Architecture (SSoA) staff

Alumni

Year in Practice students

MArch students

International Undergraduates

Mature students

## VOICES

This guide contains quotes gathered from across the School of Architecture. You can use the coloured key to identify quotations that might be particularly relevant for you.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

This guide sits within a framework of School of Architecture and University resources. At the end of this guide you will find links to related information and support you can access.

You are always able to approach any member of staff for further advice.

“Students were really complimentary about the huge amount of support given by staff, and felt there was plenty of support available if things go wrong. They believed that this support characterised the place and spoke of having a really special time at Sheffield.”

External examiner

# What makes studying ARCHITECTURE AT SSoA unique?

Not all schools of architecture are the same, and each school has its own agenda.

You will be encouraged to explore different ways of learning and be offered opportunities to develop your own tools for learning through research and inquiry.

“Students see Sheffield as ‘the’ School to go to for the best balance of arts and humanities and technology, giving them the best skills to get a job at the end of the course.”

External examiner

We seek to offer a broad educational experience that gives you space to form your own opinions about architecture – we do not have a ‘Sheffield style’.

SSoA strives to be an ethically-driven school and we constantly ask ourselves and our students to question what this means.

## WHAT MATTERS AT SSoA?

At Sheffield we have some key principles that define the School, in particular: an ethos of social responsibility and environmental sustainability; an expectation that we will all question and critically reflect on our own work; an expectation that we will all question and critically reflect on the practice of architecture now and in the future; that we will continue to develop leading ideas in the theory and practice of architectural education.

“At Sheffield, there’s a real focus on us [students] as architects and people, rather than just architecture and work.”

MArch student

## INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE

SSoA is broad in both attitude and population - our student and staff body represents the most diverse group of nationalities across the entire University.

"I really like how international the School is. I came from an area with few international people and coming here, it is really interesting to hear different life experiences."

1st Year student

"Where else do you have such a cross section of cultures and ages..? We all have different backgrounds and experiences, which is great!"

Mature student

## SOCIALLY AWARE

The role architecture plays in shaping and reflecting society's values is important to the School, and we encourage an awareness of social and political agendas.

"We enjoy a reputation for being perhaps the most socially and politically engaged school of architecture in the UK."

Head of School

'The school's social agenda is so important. At a lot of schools, it's all about the 'art' of architecture. When you go into practice you see that architecture is more about people and programme.'

MArch student

## ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE

Social awareness and ethical responsibility underpin our approach to the built environment and the way we believe architectural practice should develop.

"Be ethical, whilst constantly critical."

Tutor

"It's a very different and specific agenda at SSoA. I don't know anywhere else that has that real focus on research, and on people. It's unique, and a real opportunity to develop your way of working with others."

MArch student

# What makes studying ARCHITECTURE AT SSoA unique?

## STUDENT LED

Many of our students take the initiative in arranging events or guest lectures. We encourage our students to develop their own ideas and agendas about architecture.

"Student-led activities include 'Lunchtime Specials' series of skill-based workshops; whole school events; postgraduate society; and the 'Lines of Flight' research groups... the activities populate the academic year and are of great value in developing students' resourcefulness, initiative and confidence."

SSoA

## WORKING 'LIVE'

All members of Sheffield School of Architecture are encouraged to explore 'Live' ways of working. Some modules are specifically designed to provide experience of Live Projects.

"We believe that engaging with others and with communities outside the University is important... Engagement within and outside our community of learning is central to our ethos."

SSoA

"Doing real projects that affect real people is a great introduction to the MArch course, and the School itself."

MArch student

## PROGRESSIVE TEACHING

SSoA is recognised as a world-leader in developing progressive learning and teaching methods in architectural education. Student participation is a fundamental part of our ethos.

'The course has taught me the process of developing, testing and critically reflecting upon my ideas, which in turn has allowed me to find a way of working that suits me.'

MArch student

"There's a great freedom to do and pursue things that you're interested in through your work."

MArch student



## COLLABORATIVE & CROSS DISCIPLINARY WORKING

Interdisciplinary and collaborative work is supported throughout the School, with opportunities to collaborate with other disciplines including landscape, engineering, and urban design.

“Through the School I’ve been able to get involved with bigger projects, such as Festival of the Mind. It was a great opportunity to broaden my knowledge of the city and interact with others, as well as being part of a wider initiative.”

MArch student

“The school is very open to new ideas, and to collaboration.”

MArch student



## SPECIFIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Students at SSoA are taught to use tools such as public engagement, participation, creative site surveys and ongoing reflective review to generate socially aware projects with real and meaningful outcomes.

“I really like the participation process here. It might be hard to realise at the same level in China and Sheffield... but I will try to use these methods in design. I studied architectural design before and never thought we could connect what we learnt in the classroom with communities and society.”

MAAD student



## QUESTIONING THE ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT

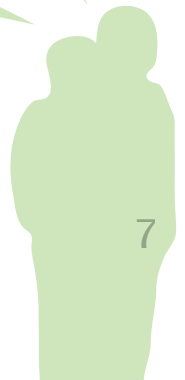
At SSoA we expect our students to actively consider and test ways in which their future practice can shape the built environment.

“By questioning the role of the architect you are able to really consider how and why we produce architecture.”

MArch student

“Sheffield expect you to challenge the role of the architect... there’s this expectation that you should be doing something different, thinking about the social purpose.”

MArch student



# What is STUDIO CULTURE at SSoA, and what is the studio for?

The architecture design studio is central to many courses at our School, and graduating students tell us that the studio culture is what they will miss the most about SSoA.

But what actually is the architecture studio, and what do we mean by 'studio culture' at SSoA?

## A BASE FOR ARCHITECTURE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

The architecture studio offers a rich working environment. It is the space in which the design courses operate. To a large extent it represents the home of the School within the University.

"Sheffield University generally feels very grounded and down to earth, and that's reflected in the studio environment."

2nd Year student

"Working in the studio helps you to build all those little unquantifiable skills that no one tells you about - it's those skills that really help you grow as an architecture student."

3rd year student

## A SPACE FOR WORK

Activity in studios is broadly design related. Space is usually shared between years and courses and this encourages cross-fertilisation of ideas. Tutorials, meetings and reviews often take place in the studio.

"I will miss the collective learning within the School; you learn a lot from your peers working in the studio."

3rd year student

"Be prepared to work hard and to give it your all, because the satisfaction and reward will come at the end when you achieve!"

'Year in Practice' student

## A PLACE FOR EXCHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

The studio offers space for collective learning, discussion, discourse and debate between peers, tutors and other year groups. Many students say that studio is a great place to find inspiration for their work.

"Inside of the School there's such a wealth of knowledge which is readily available to everybody. You can easily and freely ask somebody for information that they have, and they will happily share it with you."

MArch student

"Seeing what other people are doing has helped me to progress; the studio definitely helps with motivation!"

International Undergraduate student

## A SOCIAL SPACE

As well as a place for work, the studio serves as the social hub, acting as the venue for events organised by SUAS (Sheffield University Architecture Society), such as guest lectures and 'Lunchtime Specials'.

"There are such differences in culture and architectural knowledge between us... we learn so much from each other!"

2nd Year student

"I didn't know many people when I joined 5th year. SUAS was a great way to socialise and establish myself within the School."

MArch student

## A PLACE FOR FINDING SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Most students find studio a constructive, positive place to work and share ideas and skills. Many of the most useful moments in studio are those of informal help or encouragement.

"In the studio you're surrounded by people who really understand what you're going through, and you'll always find someone to talk to if you need advice."

3rd year student

"It's a caring environment. The tutors care about your success, and are always open with their advice."

3rd year student



# HOW WILL I CHANGE?

## What should I expect?

If you already possessed all the knowledge, skills and insight you might want, you wouldn't need to come to university.

We are shaped by our experiences and we cannot predict how we will be changed by them. Most students find the experience of undertaking a course at SSoA is a much richer one than they had imagined.

It is useful to be prepared to have your ideas challenged and to be open to ways of looking at the world that you might not have considered before.

### BEING SELF-REFLECTIVE

We encourage you to be reflective about your own education. This helps you to gain a balanced perspective on your learning and development and helps you to plan your own learning agendas.

"It's different from school - you learn to always question and reflect upon your work. That reflection really helps you maintain a critical approach to your work which is so important as a designer."

International Undergraduate student

"Work at Sheffield is iterative - if you conclude that something doesn't work, the process is useful because you learn..."

MAAD student

### ESTABLISHING NEW NETWORKS

SSoA is a community of learning. The common interests people share make the School a natural place to create networks and friendships. We are known as a very friendly School.

"At Sheffield you are encouraged to develop your projects with others, and not to internalise them within the School itself. You can develop a project that is not just about knowledge for yourself, but that also generates knowledge that can be of benefit to others."

MArch student

"I've met so many interesting people."

3rd Year student



## DEVELOPING AN APPRECIATION OF OTHERS

Meeting people of different cultures and backgrounds is one of the most rewarding things about university.

"It's valuable working with other people from different backgrounds... there's a way of thinking that relates to where you've come from and it's interesting to learn from each other's methodologies."

SAS student

"We have different skills to younger students; our range of experiences can complement each other."

Mature student

## DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE

Most people grow in confidence while at university and often that is only after some periods of uncertainty and self-doubt while they question who they are and what are their priorities.

"You gain confidence by looking at others work and learning what to try."

2nd Year student

"I am certain that I have changed already. Each step of my education has been a journey to a personal independent state. I have had to develop new skills and be self-sufficient."

1st Year student

## RECOGNISING WIDER OPPORTUNITIES

Many people find that their experience takes them in different directions to the one they had expected. Be prepared to be open about new avenues you discover.

"As my critical thinking has improved I see more opportunities.... I came to university and aimed to get as much as possible; I think it's how I've grown."

2nd Year student

"We are offered a wide scope for our projects. We are not told what to do, but can explore what we are interested in."

1st Year student

# Ensuring you **ENJOY WHAT YOU DO!** at SSoA.

Most of us work best when we are thinking positively and when we feel confident.

Look at new experiences as opportunities to explore what you don't know - and what you didn't realise you did know! The atmosphere at SSoA is very supportive and we don't expect you to know everything. For most courses, there is usually an interesting mix of skills, experience and points of view in every group.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Library resources; guest tutorials; SUAS lectures; socials events; be willing to get involved and be prepared to ask when there are things you don't know about or understand.

"The guest lectures have been great. It's interesting listening to architects and designers talking about their work, rather than just reading about it in a book. It has helped me to understand their ideas."

International Undergraduate student

"Enjoy the opportunity of having so much creative freedom to explore your own interests."

Alumni

## BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

Some you may embrace, some you may not; however, being open and able to discuss other perspectives will help you to develop your own intellectual agenda about the subject and about what is important to you.

"The staff body is very varied - some of them are operating on the peripheries of the subject. It's been very interesting learning from them, and has made me consider my own position."

MArch student

"I think there's so much emphasis at SSoA about encouraging diversity and challenging yourself through your work."

MArch student

## MAKE YOUR WORK PERSONAL

Have the confidence to follow personal lines of enquiry that support your interests and working practices; students tell us that this is vital in generating successful, rich and enjoyable projects.

“The people who are passionate about what they do generally produce better work. Likewise, when you go into the workplace, employers do respect that you’ve pursued something that you’re interested in, so have the confidence to follow your own lines of inquiry.”

‘Year in Practice’ student

“We’re encouraged build upon our own strengths and approaches.”

MArch student

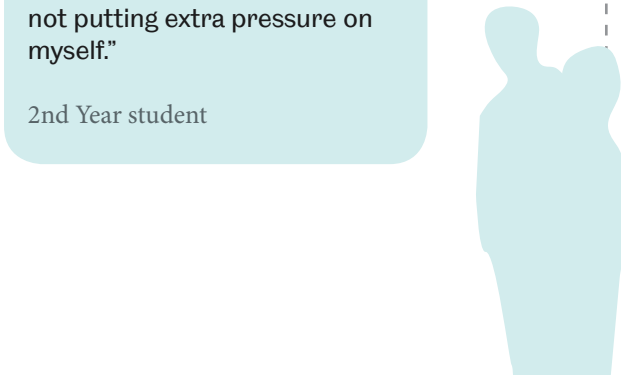


## KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

See the course as one aspect of your personal development; it does not have to be the thing that defines who you are; but it can help you decide what you are really interested in and what your priorities might be.

“At school you chase a grade to get into university. I got to uni and that mentality carried on. I realise now that I still have to work hard, but I just do as much as I can, as well as I can - and that’s fine. I’m working for myself. ... This realisation makes things easier, plus I’m enjoying the course more now that I’m not putting extra pressure on myself.”

2nd Year student



## TAKE TIME OUT

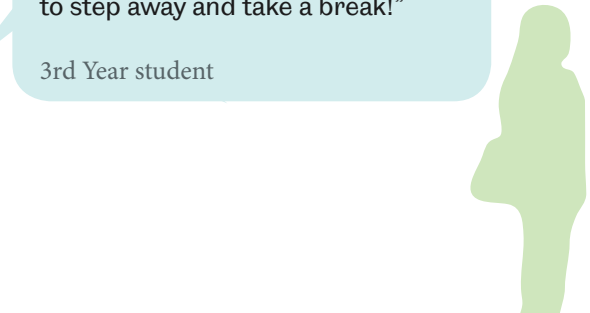
Try not to fall into a trap of working all of the time - think quality, not quantity. Plan your time efficiently to include breaks and the chance to reflect upon your progress. Plan for the times of year when you will be most busy.

“Sheffield is a great place to be a student... the University is really close to the city centre, and if you need a change of scenery, the Peak District is nearby and easily accessible. I think I’ll miss that!”

MArch student

“Develop your own interests outside the course - they’ll feed into your studio work, so it’s really good to step away and take a break!”

3rd Year student



# What ARCHITECTURAL SKILLS will I develop at SSoA?

Design, CAD, drawing, research, presentation, how to design a building....?

Design is a complex process and requires skills, knowledge and judgement that might not be immediately apparent. It necessitates the ability to develop a brief with a client; to understand contracts and to appreciate the professional responsibility owed to a wider society.

The design process itself can often be confusing as we try to navigate through the many, sometimes conflicting, choices that are open to us.

Many architectural skills are very transferrable and welcomed by a wide range of employers.

"The student work is fantastic and some of it really spectacular. Drawings are very special showing even further evolution of presentation work and use of media.... The use of technology is also very good."

External examiner

## CORE ARCHITECTURAL SKILLS

For undergraduates, a range of workshops and projects will help you develop a broad set of architectural design skills.

"You learn to use CAD differently, incorporating it with hand drawing rather than just using it in place of a drawing board and T-square. With practice I began to use it as a design tool, rather than thinking of it as a presentation method."

2nd Year student

"Technical and computer skills are crucial and can save time."

Mature student



## LEARNING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE

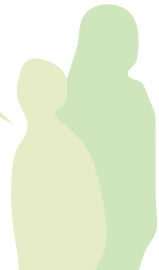
Fundamental to learning about architecture is learning to question - including questioning your own thoughts of what the subject is about and what knowledge you might need.

"I felt prepared to do my year in practice. We had a lot of training in third year preparing us for interviews and the world of work.... the modules on law and management were really useful."

MArch student

"Don't think that you will be doing the course to draw all day, because that is only a small part of the job as an architect..."

Mature student



## GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE DESIGN PROCESS

Understanding and experiencing the stages of the design process can be a new experience for some students. We encourage students to recognise the value throughout this process.

"At the beginning I thought that in order to be a successful architect, you have to design a successful building. But the design process is very important and shows how your ideas have developed."

International Undergraduate student

"You're learning skills that are different to other subjects and it's important to remember that."

3rd Year student



## WORKING TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Working to professional standards across a number of disciplines will help to prepare you for the workplace. For example, the ability to present your ideas clearly is a skill which will be valued by any employer.

"Studio work is always tied closely with other modules, such as management and sustainability. Tying in the written aspect of the course with the studio work is important at SSoA, and it helps you learn to think critically in one design aspect whilst always considering other related factors. It helps you learn to develop relevant projects that could be positioned in the real world."

3rd year student



# What types of **TRANSFERABLE SKILLS** will I develop at SSoA?

The skills offered by an architecture degree are remarkably broad and are transferable to many sectors.

Some of our graduates decide to explore other avenues with the skills they have gained - including fashion-buyer, international finance analyst, property developer, and Higher Education project manager.

Graduates from SSoA have gone on to work for some of the best-regarded architectural practices in the UK and abroad.

## APPRECIATING THE VALUE OF PROCESS

Students at SSoA are encouraged to experiment and to reflect on their development work. Rigorous process and analysis can be re-deployed in many situations.

"The great thing about Sheffield graduates is that they are able to think around a problem instead of just crashing straight into it".

Employer

"It's working towards an understanding of the process of architecture that's so important to the learning experience at SSoA."

3rd Year student

## LEARNING TO MANAGE YOUR WORKLOAD

Students often say that working efficiently is a hugely beneficial skill both during and after university. So, how do students work on lots of different tasks at the same time?

"Prioritise important work, and cut out labour intensive tasks which don't add value. Be ruthless; select what you really need and spend more time on that!"

3rd Year student

"Work smart - use drawings and models you already have. Make your work work for you - for example, consider making one model for explaining your site, your strategy and your perspectives."

2nd Year Student

## DEVELOPING A PERSONAL SKILLSET

At SSoA you will be encouraged to develop your own methods of working. While core skills are important, there is no such thing as a 'standard' architect!

"It's the lateral thinking, problem solving and design skills that you learn at Sheffield that are definitely more important in the workplace."

'Year in Practice' student

"I feel like I've gained a great foundation of skills to build my career."

'Year in Practice' student

## TIME MANAGEMENT

Learn to make good estimates of how long certain tasks might take you. Plan and prioritise your work. Keep less demanding tasks for when you are more tired.

"It is self-administration and use of time that makes you a successful student."

Mature student

"Spend as much time on theory as practical work, as it affects the practical in a large way; it changes the very way you design."

'Year in Practice' student

## BEING ATTENTIVE AND RIGOUROUS IN YOUR WORK

It is easy to think of tasks and assignments as chores - in fact they are the means by which you are stretched and challenged intellectually, especially in the areas you would prefer to avoid.

"Always take time to figure out your own view and draw your own conclusions."

3rd Year student

"The University emphasised the importance of taking ownership of your project and paying close attention to detail... often this has meant that I am prepared for the next task as I don't have to waste time redoing work."

'Year in Practice' student



# What does **SELF DIRECTED LEARNING** mean at SSoA, and why does it matter?

Learning at SSoA is not a passive experience with facts or opinions presented to you to remember. You will be expected to actively engage with your course, your tutors and your peers.

The learning at SSoA is often described as inquiry-based learning, where students are encouraged to question, experiment and reflect on what they are learning.

Students quickly get used to this and understand that it makes them independent - they also appreciate that it is a very rewarding education.

Learning is an experience, not a commodity, and this is why we expect you to take responsibility for managing your own work. Students tell us that they feel like they get a lot of support in their learning at SSoA.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN EDUCATION

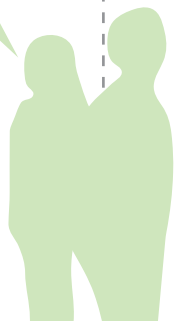
Self directed learning does not mean you are left on your own or that you are not guided - quite the reverse. But you are expected to be disciplined, motivated and engaged.

“If you're expecting to come to university and have that information handed to you on a plate; it's not going to happen...”

MArch student

“I've developed my own style and understanding of what I want to do, and what kind of architect I want to be. Directing my own path has helped me grow in confidence.”

MArch student



## BEING MOTIVATED TO PURSUE LINES OF ENQUIRY

Most of the assignments you will be given will require thought, research reflection and debate to arrive at an answer. These all take commitment.

"I hadn't anticipated how much work we were expected to do ourselves... we are expected to go and find things out."

1st Year Student

"Whilst at undergrad you expect to fulfil the brief, at MArch you learn to have more long term goals – it's much more about driving the process yourself rather than relying on someone else to push you through"

MArch student

## INVESTIGATING AND INTERROGATING IDEAS

Critical analysis and the gathering of evidence on which to base your ideas is a key part of SSoA courses. This applies for humanities and design as well as technology-based modules.

"Try anything - don't be scared. First year is there to experiment - try different things to find where your skill set lies, and what it is you enjoy in architecture."

2nd Year student

"Consider your studio work process as research."

Tutor

## SELF MANAGEMENT AND WORKING INDEPENDENTLY

It may seem daunting to manage your own time and workload, but it is a skill that will develop through the course and it is invaluable to any graduate-level employment.

"I've definitely learnt to use my own initiative to tackle different situations."

MArch student

"You should think about what kind of architect you want to be as you're working on your projects. It'll help you get an idea of where to apply for work when you graduate, and it'll help you shape your portfolio to suit your interests."

MArch student



# Developing **THINKING AND REASONING** at SSoA.

You will be encouraged to develop a discipline of questioning and to critique the validity of ideas on the basis of evidence. This will help you to develop your own intellectual agenda and values. It is a remarkably valuable skill.

A key attribute of **The Sheffield Graduate** is to be a critical, analytical and creative thinker; another is to be a skilled and ethical researcher. Together, these attributes underpin methods of working that help you to develop confidence, value different perspectives and cultures, gain independence, operate professionally and be adaptable. These are all transferrable skills that open many opportunities for you.

## LEARNING TO THINK CRITICALLY

This means supporting your ideas with evidence and analysis and questioning facts or opinions to arrive at a view that is well-considered

“I think that now I can critically look at everyday stuff.... For example, when I walk to the City Hall there is a tank [fountain]. My friend asked me, ‘why can’t it have fish in it?’ I was able to explain to her in many ways why not: weather, flow of people, location..... This is quite a skill, to be able to analyse and think what the process is behind the idea.”

International Undergraduate student

## VALUING PROCESS

Having a coherent work process allows you and others to test the validity of your ideas. It also allows you to apply successful working methods to many different situations.

“In China you are always expected to design something modern and iconic; here, it’s something logical. Even if it’s simple, the process is the most important factor.”

International Postgraduate student

“The whole point is getting there, not the final thing....Tutors are looking for you to expand the brief, and I would encourage [new students] to think beyond the piece of paper.”

2nd Year student

## ADAPTING TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Adapting to new ways of working can be difficult at first but it is a valuable means of gaining new skills and perspectives from the expertise within the department.

“Here, there is no wrong or right - there is just better. It is a process of growth; you have to go through it, and you will gain information and knowledge.”

International Postgraduate student

“It’s good how tutors swap around for reviews - you gain different opinions.”

International Postgraduate student

## DEALING WITH CHANGING OPINIONS AND AGENDAS

You may receive conflicting views on how you might develop your work. Learning to balance and rationalise these views is an important skill and helps you towards independence.

“You can’t please everybody, so how can you get a balance?”

1st Year student

“It takes confidence to pursue your ideas and what interests you....”

MArch student

# COMMUNICATION

- why is it so important?

We communicate with one another in many ways, including verbally, using gestures, writing, drawing, diagrams and models. Communicating clearly is important so that you are able to explain, develop and present your ideas.

Good communication skills are vital in graduate-level jobs and especially in architecture practice. It is important for you to be adaptable to present your ideas clearly to different audiences. It is useful to remember that listening is also a communication skill.

## TO HELP DEVELOP CONFIDENCE IN YOUR WORK

Explaining your ideas clearly and concisely helps you to prioritise what is important to you in your work. It helps you to reflect on what you have achieved and where you need help.

“I was encouraged to do a lot of working models to explain my ideas, rather than just relying on verbal explanations. I've found it's a brilliant way of improving my confidence, as I'm able to make my ideas clearer to others.”

International Undergraduate

“As students grow more confident in their designs, you can see how their speaking skills improve!”

3rd Year student





## TO CONVEY YOUR IDEAS TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Explaining your ideas clearly and concisely is a vital skill for architecture and for other disciplines. Explaining to different audiences often reveals new dimensions in your work.

“When you’re developing your own design you have to consider how to present and describe it. It’s important that your audience understands your ideas.”

2nd Year student

“Communicate not more, but smarter.”

Tutor

## TO DEMONSTRATE DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING

Clarity and accuracy in presentation will help others have confidence in your designs, and will help discussion of your work to be aimed at the most important aspects.

“Reports force you to think about why you’re doing what you’re doing with your design. They really help you understand and explain the structure of your projects.”

MArch student

“No one had told me how to stand up in front of people and communicate with them before I came here. It really helps me get to grips with what I’m working on.”

Mature student

## TO HELP DEVELOP WORK TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Whether drawn, written, a report or a verbal presentation, all communication skills are applicable to graduate-level employment. Our students are known for being confident and professional.

“Whatever job you do after university you’re going to have to present information.... if it’s well written and laid out, its going to be easier to understand and read. Those skills are always useful.”

2nd Year student

These days you are up against such competition in the industry - you need to make those five minutes count!”

Mature student

# COMMUNICATION

## LEARNING ARCHITECTURAL TERMINOLOGY

In any profession there are conventions and specialist terminology to learn. This terminology is part of the grounding for the discipline to help you communicate clearly with peers.

“Understanding of terminology is a really useful thing to get out of your placement – it’ll help you build dialogues during Part II.”

MArch student

“The terminology is new, and it’s a little like learning a new language. It’s explained well though, and because we are all learning together I haven’t found it hard to pick up new words.”

International Undergraduate

## TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

The nuance of words can get lost in translation. Be aware that words can have alternative meanings and different spellings in different places or communities.

“Technical and philosophical words are hard to translate - we understand them in our language but it’s hard to find the identical words...”

MAAD student

## COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Not everyone is familiar with reading drawings or has knowledge of specialist terminology. Understand who you are communicating with and adapt appropriately.

“Live Projects are a great chance to learn to communicate with clients and participants - the projects depends on building those dialogues successfully. Being out of the studio makes you aware of how you have to adapt your ways of communicating with different people.”

MArch student

## DISCOURSE TO HELP YOU DEVELOP YOUR WORK

Be open to discussion when you present your work. It is good to support your ideas, but listen to the comments of others that might expose you to new ways of seeing or working

"[Students of] other degrees don't see each others' work, whereas we always have constant discussion and review among the studio. It's so valuable!"

3rd Year student

"Sometimes its easier to see things in other people's work than your own – you're not so close to it."

1st Year student

## PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND 'PIN-UPS'

Learning to prepare and deliver public presentations (often called 'pin-ups') can be a big transition for some students. But its a really valuable skill to have!

"If you're better at speaking it might be easier at the beginning, but you see people grow as they gain confidence in the group - it's great... "

3rd Year student

"When you present, remember that, at Sheffield, there is no wrong or right - there is just better. It is a process of growth; you have to go through it, and you will gain information and knowledge."

International Postgraduate student

## DEALING WITH PRESENTATION NERVES

It is normal to feel nervous about reviews at first. Try to remember that you are in a supportive environment. Be positive and also be clear about where you think you need advice.

"My confidence has grown significantly in terms of public speaking. The fact is that you'll get critiqued afterwards - I was always shy of showing my work and getting opinions, but that's how you learn. You learn to be proud of it."

2nd Year student

"Have self-belief: the work that you're producing is worth other people's time."

3rd Year student

# Why is **GROUP WORK** important at SSoA?

Students often say that group work is the forum in which they learn most about: each other, cultures, language and skills.

Groups should be places where everybody can express their opinions, contribute their ideas and share their knowledge. Working collaboratively in groups is also practical, it helps you be productive and cover ground more quickly in your studies.

Groups have the potential to be supportive, helping students cope with change. Groups can also be difficult places to work, but often the challenges they present can be important learning opportunities as well, even though it may not feel like it at the time!

For employers, having people who are skilled at group or team-working is a real priority.

## THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY IS A JOINT ENDEAVOUR

The University operates in a series of countless groups - some very formal, some simply loose collections of people with common interests. The biggest group is the whole University, including its alumni.

“One of the best things about being part of the University are the opportunities to work with people from different disciplines. The breadth of perspectives definitely enriches projects, and it's a very rewarding experience.”

3rd year student

“Its good finding out what other people know and making my own contribution.”

1st Year student

## GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GROUP WORK

Many students who arrive at SSoA have not experienced immersive group working before. Students are often surprised by the amount of group work on the course, but also how valuable they find working in groups.

“Group working is really important. Before we came here we did not have many expectations or know what it is about.”

1st Year student

“It’s a skill - learning to learn from other people.”

2nd Year student

## GETTING YOUR IDEAS ACROSS IN A GROUP

Most students recognise how valuable it is to learn how, and when, to get their ideas across in group work... and when to let other members of the group make their own contribution.

“The skills I gained from various group work projects combined with working together with other students in the studio has definitely enabled me to work well in a professional design team.”

‘Year in Practice’ student

“You get more out of group work if you engage in discussions... I’ve found explaining and developing ideas within a group to be very rewarding.”

1st Year student

## DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

It takes time to understand how to get the most out of group work, particularly for students who have come from a different learning culture.

“Sheffield students become very skilled in contributing to group work and this skill is valued greatly by employers.”

SSoA

“Listening is important! Being able to listen, take on board and respond to other people’s ideas and opinions has definitely enabled [my] designs to develop further.”

‘Year in Practice’ student

# Why is GROUP WORK important at SSoA?

## TO HELP WIDER GROUP BONDING

Group work is a very good way to help people get to know one another. You find that people have skills and abilities that you would not have anticipated had you not worked together.

"Field trips have been a great opportunity to get to know each other."

1st Year student

"Exchange of ideas in group work informs students' development of their own personal agendas."

SSoA

## TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Students often say that group work is the forum in which they learn most. Skills can be shared easily in groups, ideas get talked-through and different ways of thinking can be tried out.

"Sometimes you just feel like you are all facing the same problems, but in reality some people know how to do things, and others don't - in a group we can all help each other."

1st Year student

"By working with people in my group I feel like I've come [from] behind in my computer skills - I can now work just as well as them."

International Undergraduate student

## TO LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER

There are a huge range of people in the School of Architecture, group work enables experiences, skills and approaches to be shared and discussed. This is how the University works.

"Having the opportunity to meet with other people who have their own - often differing - ideas about architecture, spaces and places has been really interesting, and certainly broadens your horizons."

MArch student

"We've seen a lot of things in life, whereas younger students are just forming their opinions. Different age groups means the conversation is a lot richer!"

Mature student

## BECAUSE GROUPS DON'T ALWAYS WORK

Students sometimes find it difficult when a group doesn't function effectively, but negotiating through this situation can often be a valuable learning experience.

"Adapting to other peoples' ways of working can be hard at first, but ultimately it is a valuable means of gaining from the broad range of perspectives within the department."

SSoA

"I know that employers want people who can make groups work..."

3rd Year student

## SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

Students often tell us that the experience of group working is one of the most significant memories they have of SSoA. Working with others often has a profound impression on us.

"We are all facing the same problems... some people know how to do things, and others don't, so we can all help each other."

1st Year student

"It is great working in groups, as you immediately get to know people to talk to about your work."

1st Year student

## IT'S THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS

Working in groups and learning to work productively in groups is incredibly important to your future working life.

"I like the group work, because it can help reduce workload. It is very hard to work on your own sometimes... Working in groups can be very useful, especially to develop early work in projects."

International Undergraduate student

"It's really valuable to learn to share resources and work across a group – it's exactly what you'd do in practice and it's an efficient way of working."

MArch student

# Why are REVIEWS & ASSESSMENT important for learning?

Design reviews (many schools of architecture call these 'crits') are when you pin up your work and present it to tutors, guest reviewers and other students for discussion.

At some of these events tutors will also be grading your work but the most important aspect of the review is for you to learn from the experience and from the discussion.

## ENCOURAGE ONGOING REFLECTIVE REVIEW

We encourage you to get into the habit of reflecting on your work. Being self-aware is one of the best ways of preparing for a review - it helps you to develop a balanced view of your work.

"The reviews really help you grow in confidence by presenting your work. It's all about learning, rather than criticising."

3rd year student

"After a bad review I tend to step back from it for a week, then go back to it when I'm not feeling crushed. It helps me look at my feedback more clearly and work out what to do to carry the project forward."

2nd Year student

## PREPARING FOR PROJECT MILESTONES

A review deadline often helps to push a design project forward - and helps you develop skills that will be required to manage project deadlines in practice or in other work.

"Take on criticism, but always reflect on whether that criticism holds weight..."

3rd Year student

"Being prepared for questions from reviewers is really important."

Mature student



## CROSS-STUDIO KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The review is an important chance to share ideas amongst different tutor groups. This provides valuable insight into the different ways others might have been working.

"It is good that tutors switch around - you can gain differing opinions... it can seem confusing when tutors' opinions differ, but it's also very useful in helping you learn to review your own work."

1st Year student

"I like seeing what other groups have been doing - it helps me get a perspective on my own work."

MArch student

## RECEIVING INPUT FROM ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

At some events you might gain feedback from guest reviewers. Our visiting professors are leaders in the profession and are very generous with sharing their experience and expertise.

"We have practicing architects coming in for tutorials and reviews. It's a very good thing - having their input gives another perspective, and helps you to develop more sophisticated projects."

International Postgraduate student

"Ask the questions - it shows that you're interested and that you're trying to extend your own learning and knowledge base."

MArch student

## DEALING WITH SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Some reviews won't go so well - it's important to learn to take this experience and use it as a positive influence on your work. Remind yourself that you are here to learn.

"Tutors do try to be realistic... rather than dwelling on a project that has lots of faults, sometimes they'll focus on lessons to be learnt from failures, in order to make sure the next project is really good."

3rd Year student

"All students and staff are so supportive. When you have a bad review, students give support and offer a different perspective."

International Undergraduate student

# What about life **OUTSIDE THE COURSE** whilst I'm studying?

You will have other responsibilities in life besides your studies and it is important that you learn to manage the balance between them - some students find this a challenge.

Part time jobs, interests and other commitments, as well as families and relationships all demand some of your time and attention.

There may be difficulties you don't expect - bereavement, relationship issues, financial problems. If things go wrong, don't feel that you have to face them on your own - there is a lot of help available within the School and within the University.

## REAL LIFE: AWAY FROM STUDYING

Bereavement, relationship issues, family problems, financial worries, are even more difficult to cope with when you are away from home. Ask for help if things go wrong.

"Every student runs into problems at some time during a University course. Do not feel that you are alone if you are depressed, or if you find part of the work difficult, or if personal relationships are making you unhappy. Most people experience such problems during their time as a student and it is best to share them with someone."

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## HOW DO I MANAGE THE WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

Plan in advance for things you really want to do. No one is productive if they are exhausted - make sure you get rest when you need it. Time Management workshops are run by student services.

"Organisation is so important - know when to work, and when not to work!"

2nd Year student

"It's hard getting those phonecalls [from family etc] whilst you are working and having to deal with them..."

Mature student

## BETWEEN STUDY PERIODS

Some students find work during holidays - to earn money or to gain experience. Many of our students do valuable volunteering work that also gives them excellent experience.

"The University has lots going on, and it was great being able to use the skills that I'd picked up during the course to help out with organising events for the Student's Union societies."

MArch student

"I won a bid with 3 friends to go to Romania to design and build a sensory playground for children with special educational needs."

'Year in Practice' student

## TIME OUT: HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Don't drop other interests - its healthy to have interests outside of study and it widens your network of friends. It also lends you the distance to put your studies in perspective.

"You do learn to become more efficient with your time. In 2nd year I have learnt how to reflect and recognise that I deserve a break - a little one, at least!"

2nd Year student

"Develop your own interests outside the course - they'll feed into your studio work, so it's really good to step away and take a break."

3rd Year student

# Beyond SSoA: NOW WHAT?

A degree from SSoA offers you great opportunities, many of which you may not realise until some time after you graduate.

Our graduates go into architectural practice, fashion, business, university teaching, research, and many have set up their own practices. Whatever you do, we would like you to keep in touch with us. It is rewarding for us when you let us know what you are doing and that your time at SSoA has been valuable to you.

## GOING BACK HOME

We are very pleased that we regularly hear from overseas alumni that the skills and methods learned at Sheffield are recognised by employers when they return home. Many win very prestigious jobs when they graduate.

"The most important thing I've learnt is that architecture is more than buildings - it's about social issues, community, climate and building lifespans. I've learnt its a bigger subject and I will consider these things when I rejoin practice in my own country."

International Postgraduate student

## GOING TO OTHER COUNTRIES

The reputation of The University of Sheffield and of SSoA, and the high standards that we maintain, has allowed many of our graduates to find work all over the globe.

"I got a Year in Practice job in Switzerland."

'Year in Practice' Student

"I can't believe it, but I have got a job as a lecturer at a new architecture department in my home country."

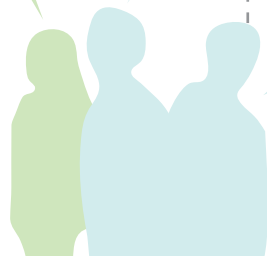
International Postgraduate Alumna

## ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

Our graduates join many of the most influential architectural practices in the UK and abroad. The skills in critical thinking and independence of mind that you learn are sought-after.

“Whilst the undergraduate course prepared me for working collaboratively in practice, it also taught me to do that whilst maintaining my personal opinions and interests.”

MArch student



## OTHER CAREER PATHS

The transferrable skills learned in an architecture degree, encompassing design, technology, humanities, and our emphasis on community engagement, equips you to pursue many careers.

“I don’t feel pressure to become an architect, but I still feel I’m picking up a huge range of skills for my future career.”

2nd Year student

“SSoA offers students the skills and training to not only to pursue a career as an Architect, but uses architecture as a tool to encourage and inspire a more analytical and reflective way of engaging with the world at a much broader level.”

3rd Year student

## BEING PART OF THE SSoA ALUMNI COMMUNITY

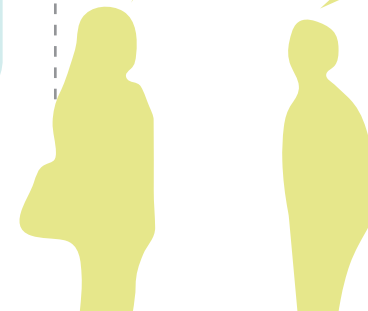
One of the most rewarding things for us is to find that our graduates are doing interesting things. Please keep in touch with us and join the alumni community on our Facebook site.

“My Director in practice went to SSoA too, and we have been back together as guest reviewers.”

Alumna

“I still keep in touch with my friends and my tutors - we shared so much together.”

Alumna



# FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Information about all the advice and support services in the University are listed in the University Academic Diary & Student Handbook.

You can also go to The Student Services Information Desk (SSiD) in the Union of Students for more information, or visit their website.

“Do not hesitate to seek advice in the early stages of a problem – the services are good and there to help you.”

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- Sheffield School of Architecture [www.shef.ac.uk/architecture](http://www.shef.ac.uk/architecture)
- Student Services Information [www.shef.ac.uk/ssid](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid)
- SSiD Health and Wellbeing [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/welfare](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/welfare)
- The Sheffield Graduate [www.shef.ac.uk/sheffieldgraduate](http://www.shef.ac.uk/sheffieldgraduate)
- Disability and Dyslexia Support Service [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/disability](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/disability)
- Student Skills and Development Centre [www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/301/about](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/301/about)
- Careers Service [www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/contacts/careers](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/contacts/careers)
- Transitions, Loneliness and Managing Change [www.well-connected.group.shef.ac.uk/advice/transitions-and-managing-change/](http://www.well-connected.group.shef.ac.uk/advice/transitions-and-managing-change/)



