

RIBA Foundation in Architecture

Course Guide for Practices



Lucy Crombie, Foundation 2022

CONTACT

E: ribafoundation@brookes.ac.uk

W: <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/architecture/riba-studio/riba-foundation>

TEAM

Dr Maria Faraone, Director, RIBA Studio
Khisha Clarke, Subject Lead, RIBA Foundation
Jenny Peterson, Employment Lead, RIBA Foundation

Jo Parry, RIBA Head of Professional Education
Christina Godiksen, Architecture Head of School, Oxford
Brookes University

THE RIBA FOUNDATION IN ARCHITECTURE

The RIBA Foundation in Architecture is a global course open to students anywhere in the world. It is delivered online by Oxford Brookes University, validated by the RIBA, and accredited by NCFE. RIBA Foundation's central aim is to widen participation in the profession of architecture by allowing students to gain experience in practice, to study part time and develop the network, portfolio, and confidence to thrive in Part 1 and beyond into registration as an architect.

The course is structured so that there are three main points of contacts for the students:

- **The RIBA Foundation Team:**
Manages the programme, sets the briefs and conducts design reviews and assessment. The main point of contact for questions about the course
- **Personal tutors:**
Each student has a personal tutor who they pay directly. They are encouraged to see their tutor at least once every two weeks. The tutors provide them with guidance on interpreting and developing their ideas in response to the brief
- **Office Mentors:**
Mentor the student's progress through their work placement once they have started work in practice.

RIBA FOUNDATION STUDENTS

Students on the RIBA Foundation course bring a wealth of personal, academic and professional experiences from a range of fields. They come from a wide range of circumstances: returning to work after periods of parental leave, pivots in career, unemployment, school leavers, unfulfilled creative desires. They have a variety of academic backgrounds. Throughout the course many students juggle full time work, childcare or other challenging personal experiences. Our students are located across the UK and Ireland, and a number have joined us from across the EEA and West Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Many are willing to move for periods to gain experience through placements with practices.

RIBA FOUNDATION COURSE STRUCTURE

The Foundation is split into 6 subject areas, tackled by all students:

- Subject A - Ways of learning - Space & Time Management
- Subject B - Ways of making - Drawing & Making
- Subject C - Ways of reflecting - Critique Technique
- Subject D - Ways of project planning - Design Development
- Subject E - Ways of gathering - Portfolio Making
- Subject F - Ways of practice - Work in Practice.

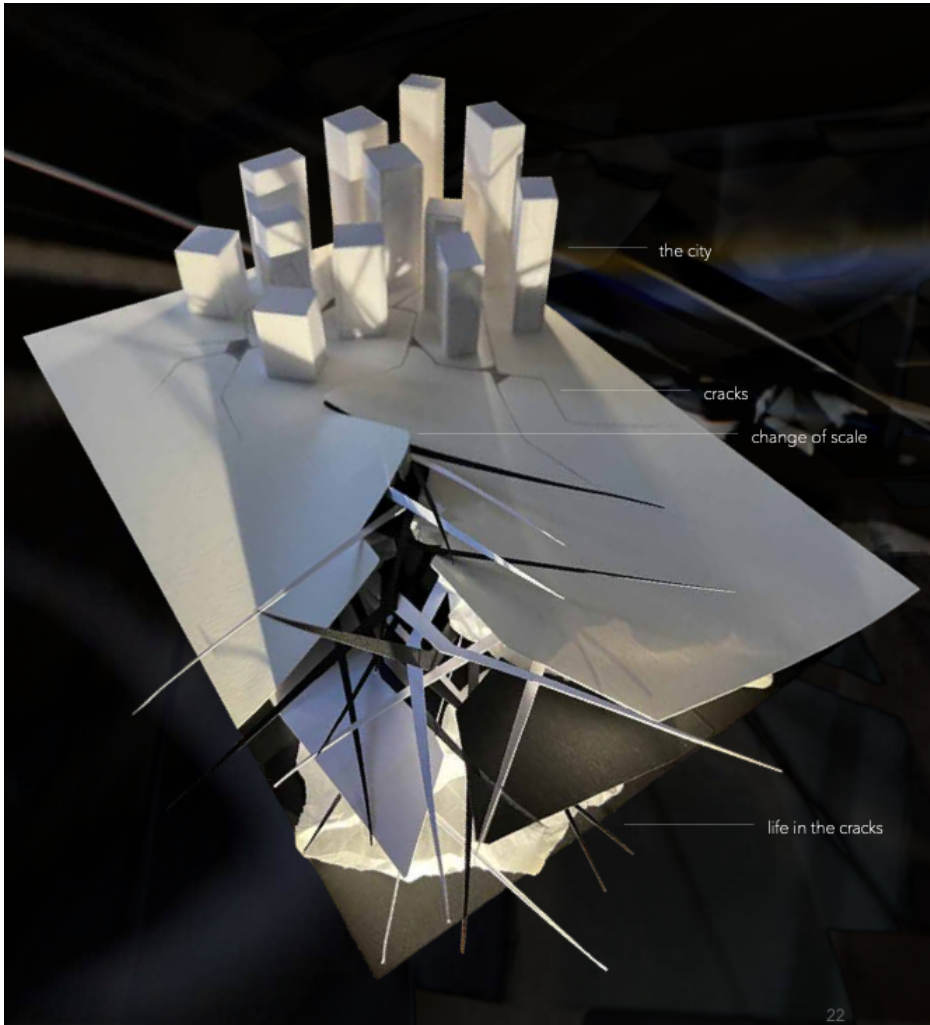
Subject F - Work in practice

Seminars including advice on creating portfolios and CVs, applying for jobs, mock interviews are run throughout the RIBA Foundation course.

In order to complete the course students are required to complete a placement totalling 200 hours of paid work experience. They can split this across more than one practice if need be.

The main objective behind gaining salaried work in practice is to enable students from non-traditional backgrounds to gain self-belief; and the understanding that they will be welcome in the profession. The placement gives students from diverse backgrounds a steppingstone to entering architecture by making contacts within the profession. Paid placement strengthens their viability to secure full time work after the Foundation course is complete. It also gives the students professional experience and confidence to enable them to apply for other alternative routes of study such as the RIBA Studio Certificate, apprenticeship, or alternatively full time or part time study.

Students are required to submit reflective feedback sheets to the RIBA Foundation team after the completion of every 50 hours of practice work.



Alvaro Ortega, Foundation 2022

THE ROLE OF PRACTICES

- To provide all, or a portion of, the 200 hours of paid work experience required to complete the course
- To provide a named Office Mentor for each student to guide them through the work experience
- To fill in and return the Mentor Form
- To expose the student to experiences across the various stages of the RIBA Plan of Work
- To support and encourage students to connect with other professionals
- To help students with their reflective feedback after every 50 hours of work
- To provide a brief report on the student's and practice's experience at the end of their work in the practice.

Whether Chartered or not, all employers should adhere to Principle 3 of the RIBA Code of Practice for Chartered Practices regarding relationships between employers and employees.

Hiring Students

There are a variety of ways that RIBA Foundation students are hired by practices:

- Students are encouraged to approach and apply to practices directly for placements
- The RIBA Foundation team can recommend a shortlist of students to a practice, providing their CVs and portfolios. Staff can guide both the student and practice through the application process
- Practices are encouraged to engage with the RIBA Foundation team and feed back on their experiences
- The process of application and interview is seen as a valuable learning experience on the course. Feedback for students, whether successful or unsuccessful is encouraged.

The 200 hours of placement can be split in many ways. Practices should discuss with prospective candidates how the work should be structured. For example: 2 days a week for 12 weeks; every day for 5 weeks; 10 days at a time separated by breaks. It depends on what suits the project they will be supporting, the mentor who they will work alongside, and the student's life. Some students save leave time in their current employment to be open to a range of possibilities.

Practices that have provided placements have found that a minimum of 2 days a week is preferred as a starting point to best benefit the student and the practice.

Remuneration and Contract

Students should be paid for the work that they do: there is no RIBA Foundation specific contract beyond the 200 hours of salaried work in practice. Students should be paid at Living Wage for their location, as a minimum - (see advice from the Living Wage Foundation - <https://www.livingwage.org.uk>). The RIBA are not expecting pension type contributions on these short-term fixed placements. If employment becomes more permanent, then PAYE elements would need to be addressed by the practice.

It is important to note that for non-traditional students, cost is a key factor to entry into the profession and the salary from the placement work is approximately equal to the costs for the course. In our experience this has been a good way for students and practices to find out what working together could be like: in some instances, students go on to establish employment contracts with their placement practices, becoming eligible for the Certificate Part 1 or Apprenticeship Part 1.

Office Mentors

RIBA Foundation students are required to work under an Office Mentor during their time on placement. Students are encouraged to seek comments on their work and to gain feedback on developing their portfolio which may also contain practice work from the placement. The Office Mentor can also offer guidance and support on Part 1 preparation.

Office Mentors should ensure that students are provided with opportunities to carry out a range of work which will broaden their knowledge, skills and experience for the course and profession.

The RIBA Foundation team run drop-in sessions for Office Mentors.

Benefits for Practices which provide placements

Employing RIBA Foundation placement students has already proven to be very rewarding for practices. Helping to evolve the atmosphere of supporting architectural training and education and being part of opening up the profession, and encouraging diversity brings new energy and perspectives. Participating practices are recognised by the RIBA and are invited to the RIBA Graduation ceremony with the RIBA Director of Education and Head of the School of Architecture, Oxford Brookes University.



Ingrid McLaren, Foundation 2021

ROLES OF RIBA FOUNDATION STUDENTS IN PRACTICES

Each practice undertakes such different types of projects and they each work in very different ways. We leave the individual role of each RIBA Foundation placement student and the method of working to be agreed on between the Office Mentor and the student, following discussion at the interview stage. Students should gain their first experiences across portions of the RIBA Plan of Work through their placements.

Students bring experiences and transferable skills from their previous lives and professions into their placement practice. At the same time, they need to learn about the profession of architecture from first principles. The ability and skills of each student varies and the practice experience is an opportunity for them to continue their learning on the job.

The RIBA Foundation course does not teach software drawing skills, but students are offered a range of workshops throughout the course and self-directed learning in this respect is encouraged. The students have access to various student licences for software.

RIBA Foundation students have taken on a range of roles in their practice placements. The list below is not exhaustive but gives an idea of some of these:

- Helping to undertake and draw up surveys
- Learning software skills through doing
- Admin
- Small drawing packages
- Small design tasks
- Document controlling
- Marketing
- Observing and note taking in meetings
- Accompanying Mentors on site visits
- Model making.

Roles undertaken have depended on both the student's and practice's openness and willingness to learn and throw themselves into the process.

RIBA Foundation Course Schedule

The course runs each year from December to July. The students' practice placement, (200 hours), can take place at any time during their studies and, exceptionally, after the course. Students are supported beyond the end of the course by RIBA Foundation.