

Undergraduate Admissions for Architecture (International applicants)

University of Bath

Personal Statement Exercise June 2021

Note: This reflects the situation and selection criteria for the 2020/21 undergraduate admissions cycle. The criteria for admission are reviewed on an annual basis with the relevant academic Department and may therefore be altered or amended in subsequent admissions cycles.

Background

The University of Bath typically seeks to recruit 42 International students each year into our Architecture degree. It is a four-year course, and all students are expected to complete two six-month architecture internships during the degree. This removes the need for a graduate to undertake an architecture placement after their first degree allowing them to progress immediately into the MArch two-year professional qualification upon completion of their degree at Bath

In 2020/21 there were 461 International applicants for the Architecture degree, and there has been steady growth in application numbers; over the last three admissions cycles we have seen a 22% increase in International applicants for architecture, and this trend appears to be continuing for 2021 entry.

Selection for the Architecture degree is highly competitive, with around 43% of International applicants receiving an offer for 2021 entry.

The selection process places an emphasis on the prior subjects studied. Entry qualifications should ideally include a broad range of relevant subjects, including Mathematics or Physics and an art or design subject. Study in an essay-based subject, such as English Literature, Geography, History, Economics, Politics, a modern foreign language or Psychology, is also beneficial. If an applicant has been unable to study art or design as part of their entry qualifications we look for evidence of substantial exposure to art and design thinking and its applications, for example through extra-curricular art or design work, classes or projects. A number of applicant's apply after taking an additional art foundation year if they have not studied Art or Design at A level (or equivalent).

Qualifications

Applicants with **A-levels** (UK or International versions) would require grades of A*AA. There is no specified subject for the A* grade. Additional credit will be given for strong grades in a recognised project-based qualification (e.g. Extended Project Qualification) or if Mathematics is studied as a fourth subject alongside Physics, an art or design subject, and one other A-level.

Candidates taking the **International Baccalaureate** will need 36 points overall and 7dd at Higher level. We prefer applicants who study Visual Arts or Design Technology and one of Physics or either Mathematics courses (AI or AA) at Higher Level. If you are taking any of these subjects at Standard Level your offer may instead include 7 in that subject. In this case the typical offer is 36 points with 6, 6, 6 or 7, 6, 5 in three Higher Level subjects and 7 in the Standard Level subject(s).

Applicants with **US qualifications** will 5, 5, 5 in three Advanced Placement tests (AP) including Calculus BC or any Physics AP subject.

We accept no more than one Calculus AP as one of these three subjects.

Applicants will also need to achieve their High School Diploma and an ACT score of 30 or SAT scores of 740 in both Mathematics and Evidence-based Reading and Writing. For 2021 entry we are aware of the limited access to SAT and ACT exams during the pandemic. Taking this into consideration, we consider any relevant evidence of performance in Maths and English from Advanced Placements. Applicants not studying an AP in English Language and Composition or AP English Literature and Composition are required to undertake a further

English test in order to meet our entry requirements. The University does not consider SAT Subject Tests as appropriate qualifications for satisfying the entry requirements.

Students taking **Standard XII Higher Secondary School Certificate examinations in India** are required to achieve an average of 85% across four subjects with 85% in Mathematics or Physics. We do not accept Physical Education as one of these four subjects. These requirements are for the CBSE and CISCE boards. Applicants taking other Boards are advised to contact the Undergraduate Admissions Office in advance of submitting their application.

GCSE (or equivalent) grades are an important part of selection for this course and most students made an offer will have five or more GCSEs at grade 8, 9 or A*. We are typically looking for a strong grade in either Mathematics or Physics GCSE, Art or Design GCSE and a humanities GCSE subject.

International applicants will be required to also take an **English Language proficiency test** unless their prior education and qualifications already satisfy the English language requirements (equivalent to a B grade in GCSE English Language or Literature). Each degree course is assigned one of three categories for required English Language proficiency – A, B or C. Architecture is a Category A course. The full list of recognised English Language qualifications for category A courses can be viewed at [English language requirements for qualifications: Category A \(bath.ac.uk\)](https://www.bath.ac.uk/english-language-requirements-for-qualifications-category-a/)

Selection is primarily made through an assessment of the UCAS application, including prior academic record and subject mix for post-16 studies. We do not interview for the degree or require submission of a design portfolio. The personal statement should discuss the applicant's motivation for choosing architecture and give information about relevant non-academic interests and achievements. We are looking for applicants to demonstrate a strong interest in and engagement with architecture, using examples of extracurricular or co-curricular activities, work experience or additional reading or study (such as a relevant EPQ or other project-based qualification).

Bath particularly values project-based qualifications, so a student completing an EPQ and achieving an A grade, or the Welsh Baccalaureate skills challenge certificate who achieves a B grade will have their offer reduced by one A-level grade.

Most candidates are assessed only on the basis of their UCAS application. Where applicants have returned to study or have qualifications that are non-standard an academic interview with the admissions tutor and academic selector can be arranged.

The Task

You have been provided with four personal statements, and additional information drawn from the candidate's UCAS application (prior and current academic qualifications, material from the reference, other information that provides context). One application is outstanding and receives an offer. Three are borderline for an offer; one receives an offer, two do not. You have 20 minutes to decide which applicant receives which offer.

If you want a copy of the solution for this activity please contact me at the e-mail below.

Mike Nicholson,

Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach, University of Bath

mn458@bath.ac.uk

Candidate A Personal Statement

Architecture is the intersection of creativity, problem solving, cultural expression, and community. Every architect blends these components differently, but they all have a similar effect: touching, illuminating, and improving the lives of others. I have dreamed of making a tangible difference in this world, and I am interested in architecture because I know that it will help me turn this dream into a reality.

My interest in architecture originally sparked when I got addicted to the HGTV channel. It fascinated me how the slightest details in texture or lighting could have the profoundest impact on the clients' emotions. Here, I fell in love with the idea that I could use architecture and design as a means of cultivating emotional, physical, and societal change.

Since my initial inspiration from HGTV, I have adopted a "learn by doing" lifestyle and have eagerly taken advantage of the opportunities at my disposal. I am lucky to attend an American high school that has the resources to offer an extensive architecture curriculum. As I have progressed, I have become increasingly familiar with sophisticated software like Sketchup, AutoCAD, and Revit. Thanks to this class, I feel comfortable in my ability to create digital plans and renderings in addition to drawing and model-building.

This past summer, I continued to pursue architecture by enrolling in a University Architecture Discovery Program. It was two grueling weeks of hands-on studio work. As rigorous and overwhelming as it was, I found the work to be incredibly rewarding. Unlike my technologically orientated high school courses, this summer program was entirely manual. It was a completely different skill set from what I was used to, but it taught me the dexterity and patience behind architecture. This program also showed me how important dedication and resilience are in this field. As a student who has always had high expectations and challenged herself in the highest classes like AP Calculus BC and AP Physics C, I strongly believe that I have developed the determination and mentality required to succeed.

Having visited the architecture firm Axi:Ome as part of the Architecture Discovery Program, I am aware of how demanding the field can be. It confirmed that architecture is a blend between technology and hands-on projects, but that it also includes teamwork. As an athlete, I know what it is like to be a leader and part of a team. As a result, I always strive to be cooperative and encouraging in order to earn respect and inspire hard work.

Recently, I have discovered the passion I have and the global need to couple environmentalism with architecture. Being part of my school's environmental club and an active volunteer at a local community garden has increased my awareness of how beautiful and vulnerable the natural environment is. In the article "Empire State of Green" by Sarah Kaplan and Aaron Steckelberg at The Washington Post, they state that "some 141,000 additional architects, engineers and technicians will be required" to spread the environmental movement through New York City alone. I would love to be 1 of those 141,000 workers, but I also want to be part of the larger network that expands this green movement internationally.

I am interested in pursuing a career in architecture because I have a strong desire to inspire change. With the help of your university, I know I will gain valuable experience and perfect my skills to help me succeed in building structures to promote environmentalism and address other global issues.

Candidate A Background

Attending a high performing public high school in the USA, offering almost 30 Advanced Placement courses. The applicant will have taken a total of six AP courses across Junior and Senior years.

The applicant is placed in the 99th percentile in standardized test scores for her year group of 1025 students.

AP tests (predicted)

Physics C: Mechanics (5), Calculus BC (5), Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism (5), Psychology (5)

High School Diploma (pending)

AP tests (achieved)

English Language and Composition (5), US History (5), Spanish Language and Culture (5)

ACT scores (achieved)

English (35), Maths (33), Reading (34) Science (35)

The referee (a College Guidance Counsellor) describes the applicant as **“acutely intellectual, mature, and conscientious.... independent, self-motivated, and an engaged learner. Their hardworking personality is truly at the core of their academic success”** setting high personal expectations and taking a rigorous course schedule of honors and Advanced Placement courses.

The referee is very positive about the applicant’s **“ability to identify the time-commitment necessary to reach their goals, and consistency in the classroom.”** The applicant has demonstrated a long-standing interest in Architecture as a career and **“has completed several competitive summer architecture programs and has worked tirelessly to develop a comprehensive portfolio.”** There is a clear ethical drive as the applicant wants to have **“the opportunity to give back to the community, addressing societal problems through the spaces and buildings they create.”**

The size of the School cohort means that most students have a range of teachers over the duration of their senior High years, but the applicant’s US History tutor taught them for three separate classes over the three-year period. They have indicated that the applicant has **“intellectual courage – their ideas were deeper, their questions more challenging, and their connections more insightful.”**

Candidate B Personal Statement

"When I'm working on a problem, I never think about beauty. But when I've finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it's wrong." This thought-provoking quote by Buckminster Fuller has helped me bring clarity to what I will do in my life. My passion for travel has taken me to many cities in EU, US, SEA and India. This has introduced me to various cultures and environments; and how all of it has manifested into unique architecture. My visits to forts, museums, monuments and buildings, etc. leave me with the impression that times have been encapsulated within a time bubble for eternity. The wondrous solutions worked upon with such a display of craft, art and beauty leave me gasping. Bernini's Piazza Navona and Moshe Safdie's Marina Bay Sands are awe inspiring for their details and design work. Such solutions have sown the seeds of my interest to become an Architect.

Architecture is a wonderfully balanced integration of creativity and technology, and I have been a keen student of both these fields. I have excelled in Maths and Science in school, which is evident from my A+ grades. These subjects have helped me learn problem solving skills. From an early age, I have been learning different art and dance forms. My projects in art include sketches, compositions, paintings, perspectives, isometric views, digital art, etc. and these have helped me understand form and structures better, and will be useful during my course. I have been learning Kathak, a well-known classical dance form of India, for the last 9 years and have already completed the highest certification possible at my age. This dance form is technical and yet supported by elegant expressions of movements and facial expressions. This is also a testimony of my resilience and ability to persevere with my passion. I have enjoyed co-curricular activities and represented school in many Art, Science and Dance Competitions, and this led to my appointment as the President of the Fine Arts of my school. Winning the 1st Prize in Junkyard Showdown Inter-School Competition demonstrated my ability to work within a team, solve problems through trial and error, and win in a competitive environment. My academics were complemented by my engagements with events, school projects, dance and art classes. Multitasking sparked off various facets of my personality and what I pride myself most is my ability to adhere to timelines. My love for environment, sustainability and community service is another facet of my personality. For the last 5 years, I am a regular volunteer with SayTrees in planting trees across Bangalore. Miyawaki Method has helped me create mini forests and make my city greener. I am a regular visitor to Care Homes for poor and disabled children and this has brought home the significance of inclusive design. All these experiences have helped me develop my artistic sensibilities, understanding of historical and cultural context, project management and problem solving skills. This together with my interest in science and sustainability has led me to the decision to become an architect. I am aware of the fact that architecture course will require me to work long hours with intensity and focus, and I am fully motivated to do it. I enjoyed the conversations with the Founder of InForm Architects which helped me to understand the need for the best education in architecture. The UK boasts of a unique architecture and a history that has over time developed beautiful monuments and buildings. I believe that the UK will provide me just the right environment to study architecture with historical context, teaching excellence with practical application and world-class studios with a global outlook.

Combining my passion into work, I aspire to build a design firm that will not just work on providing functional and sustainable environment for people but work on achieving what Frank Gehry has said, "Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness."

Candidate B Background

The applicant is attending a national public school (fee paying) in India, that provides CBSE-accredited High School Certificates. The School has been operating since 2013. Class sizes are capped at 33 students, and the Standard XII classes focus on two subject streams:

Stream 1: Maths, English, Chemistry, Physics, Biology

Stream 2: Maths, English, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science

Standard XII CBSE High School Certificate – predicted 91% overall:

English (95%), Maths (90%), Physics (90%), Chemistry (90%), Biology (90%)

Standard X (achieved) – 94.2% overall:

English Communication (93%), Hindi (96%), Maths (94%), Science (94%), Social Science (94%)

The application has been submitted by an educational agent, with the reference supplied by the student's English teacher at their School.

The applicant is described as **"a sincere, intelligent and creative student."** The referee ranks the applicant **"in the top percentile of students that I have taught in the past five years with respect to their ability to develop an idea and present top-quality project work."** They show **"enthusiasm to participate in various competitions"** with an **"eagerness and enthusiasm to go beyond the set curriculum."** Their **"overall academic performance and attitude to excel is also reflected in their scores and grades during high school and extra-curricular activities."**

The referee describes the applicant as **"friendly, approachable and collaborative with other students in the class."** The applicant **"has demonstrated teamwork skills in class assignments as well as while participating in the team competitions in or outside the school."**

In addition to their academic studies the applicant **"has been at the forefront of representing school in various exhibitions and competitions across Arts, Science and Dance...helping win numerous trophies which includes 5 trophies each in Arts and Dance and 2 in Science competitions."** Most notable was a **"First prize won in a Junkyard Showdown Competition"** which the referee indicates provides a great example of the applicant's **"ability to solve problems, take an idea to completion and an ability to synthesis thoughts of everyone in the team."** The applicant is also a very talented classical dancer, putting in many hours of additional time to train, and they have **"demonstrated great perseverance, enthusiasm and initiative, which is why they were also appointed as the President of Fine Arts of the School."** In the view of the referee the applicant's **"work in art, dance and science suggest that she has the ability to be creative as well as scientific,"** making them an ideal candidate for Architecture.

Candidate C Personal Statement

Exposure to different cultures embodied by exquisite structures while travelling has galvanized my attraction to the creation of atmosphere by the combination of the technology and feats of human imagination. I am drawn further to the prominent role of architecture in responding to the everyday needs of people's rest, security, and safety. Exploration of the factors involved in 'good design' is therefore of high importance to promoting wellbeing, a strong sense of belonging, and identity through the user experience.

Architectural detail has the magical ability to evoke an atmosphere for user experience. I believe it is essential for architects to create an atmosphere, as it affects a user's haptic realm and psychology. Stepping into St. Paul's Cathedral, the murals, stained-glass, and stone construction painted a sacred atmosphere of reverence, invoking a desire to self introspect. I desire to explore further how architectural details can give rise to various feelings: as Juhani Pallasmaa said, 'architectural work is its full and integrated material, embodied and spiritual essence.'

In an article about the oldest all-wood pagoda Fogong Temple (China), the use of ingenious wood connections, such as the mortise-and-tenon joint astounded me. I was particularly impressed by its utility of the properties of wood, as a locally available renewable resource, with natural flexibility, lightweight, high ductility which act as a shock absorber for the more earthquake-prone areas. Further researching the use of construction materials, I was intrigued by Kashgar (China), where people used mud, sticky rice, and straw to build houses. Straw was a sustainable solution to improve the bending and shear resistance of the wall, rendering it very convenient and cheap to build a low-rise, residential area. Being in a desert environment, the thick walls create sufficient thermal resistance to retain warmth during the Winter. In my opinion, increased modernisation and globalisation have led to monotony in construction methodology and materiality, thereby disregarding local contexts and identity. However, traditional building styles with poor connections and structural stability could benefit from technological advancements. I think it is vital to retain regional building techniques and traditional characteristics while keeping up with modern innovation and culture.

To design spaces responsive to the environment, I attended UCL's Young Architect programme, where we built a family house under budget and time constraints. I selected a mountainous area for the construction site, to enhance natural ventilation and incorporate panoramic views. Insistent on a cost-effective and environment-friendly design, a pitched roof encouraged rain harvesting and reduced energy consumption. This experience facilitated my understanding of the value of problem-solving skills and I improved my ability to manage my time effectively whilst working independently and in a team.

I further developed these skills when interning at a design company in China. Helping design a public park project gave me insight into architectural drawings and how a firm functions. I created models using AutoCAD and Sketchup of recreational facilities; I included differently shaped seats with sides for climbing and interaction, thus accommodating the primary users who were elderly and children. These projects expanded my knowledge of the design process and strengthened my desire to become an architect.

As an expressive medium at the crossroads of artistic license and utility, architecture perfectly emulates my desire to combine my passion in atmospheric creativity, with my excitement at the prospect of challenging current problems with sustainable solutions. I believe that attending a rigorous course will further my exploration of the dynamic between aesthetic and architectural design, allowing me to fulfil my ambitions to design new experiences in atmospheric architecture for people to enjoy.

Candidate C Background

The applicant attends an independent Sixth Form College in the UK with a very strong academic record. They had previously attended a UK independent secondary school for their GCSEs.

A-level (predicted):

Physics (A), Mathematics (A*), Art and Design (A*)

AS level (achieved)

Physics (A), Mathematics (A), Art and Design (A), Chemistry (A)

GCSE (achieved):

9 (Chemistry), 8 (Art and Design, Maths, Physics, Biology, English Language, Geography), A* (Mandarin Chinese), 7 (English Literature)

The reference has been submitted by the College's Head of Higher Education.

The referee emphasises the candidate's **"love of art"** which means that they **"tackle assignments with enthusiasm and energy, producing practical work of A* quality that has demonstrated hours of patience. Observational drawings from first hand are accurate and skilful showing sensitive handling of media."** The applicant demonstrates **"excellent research skills to prepare coursework; they used a wide range of quality sources both historical and contemporary to explore their theme in depth. Understanding of research sources was effectively communicated in the practical investigations showing an effective application of theory to applied contexts."** The applicant shows **"strong interest in issues-based topics such as 'The Environment' and 'Animal Rights' ... a genuine interest in the ethics and moral challenges faced by architects."**

"In Maths homework assignments are submitted punctually and to a very high standard, dropping very few marks over the course of the year...Performance in internal mocks has shown persistence in striving to achieve a well-deserved A*." The applicant's **"particular strengths lie in the application of pure maths and mechanics to novel contexts, and we are confident in [their] suitability to apply these to provide a quantitative basis to architectural ideas."**

In Physics the applicant **"readily grasps new concepts and competently solve problems - an awareness of underlying physics laws and civil engineering concepts will support them in their future as an architect. They unfailingly approach problems logically and work out how data provided needs to be processed, revelling in the challenge of problem solving."** They are **"able to give clear and coherent descriptive answers both in writing and verbally... asking meaningful and probing questions and cooperating well with other students in group work."**

The applicant has sought out opportunities to gain insight into architectural work observing at an architecture firm whilst visiting family in China and also participating in a university Young Architect programme. Within the College they have been an active member of the Glee club and also the local University's Kchoreo Dance Club and is a founding member and President of the College's recently formed K-pop dance club. They regularly volunteer at a traditional Chinese medicine clinic developing interpersonal skills as well as organisational abilities. The applicant also makes clothes and jewellery, using a range of materials and methods that utilise their ability to be precise and accurate.

Candidate D Personal Statement

The language of architecture, whether that lies in material, light, or other spatial elements, is definitive of a human's experience; our architectural understanding lies within the very essence of the buildings we interact with daily. My affinity for architectural design stems from seeking to understand these exact interactions; interactions which I believe are able to inform the dialogue on alternatives to how we currently define our space. Therefore, working in close communication with a leading Norwegian architectural practice, I based the scope of my IB extended essay on the behavioural basis of residential design with particular focus on user participation, using the recently completed Vindmollebakken cohousing complex as a case study. In investigating factors such as user-inclusivity, the integration of nature and the treatment of daylight, I was introduced to a vocabulary of an architecture explicit to the conversation on the promotion of community. When examining floor plans and talking to residents, I observed how spatial sequences facilitate how humans interact, behave, and move, affirming to me architecture's need for a targeted concern for the human dimension. This has equipped me with an understanding and motivation for the need to pursue sustainable urban fabric, a notion exciting me at the prospect of studying architecture. Through my participation in Model United Nations for four years, attending conferences such as IMUN and THIMUN, as well as taking a politics-based course at a summer Academy, I have immersed myself in scholarly debate which has, due to our dynamic environment, introduced me to substantial scholarship on sustainability and supplied me with an extended awareness on human centred issues which define architectural challenges. Visits to buildings such as Carlo Scarpa's Olivetti Showroom and Tadao Ando's 21_21 Design Sight museum have visually drawn me to the discipline in their display of the tension of textures of light and shadow, and modernity and vernacular. Yet, this visual appreciation of structures, when informed on world affairs and urbanist movements delineated in literature such as Jan Gehl's 'Cities for People' and Aldo Rossi's 'L'Architettura della Citta' has developed to recognise the inherent need of a humanist approach to design.

By initiating several design projects, I have witnessed the imperative role design can have on the social good. I have translated my passion for design within the school community, creating the visual identity of 50:50, a student-run club raising awareness on gender inequality as head designer, a task I also executed for our school's SCANDMUN conference. The impact of such design within the wider community has stressed to me design's role as an agency in benefit to humans. I have continuously challenged myself on conceptual and creative bases, with my desire to take a proactive role in the design sphere evident in my participation in the Rijksstudio Young Designer award 2020, Helmut Lang contest 2020 and the Weltformat Newcomer Award 2020. I have attended openings and lectures at the Stavanger Kunsthall, engaging myself with contemporary aspects of local visual practices, and visits to artist studios in the art collective Tou Scene have enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the creative process of the artist, inextricably linked to the workings of the architect. At a Bruno Munari retrospective, I was met with visual experimentation forcing the technical and conceptual limits of design, inspiring in me the desire to pursue similarly innovative experimentation in architecture, a discipline which I believe indispensable in the encouragement of a betterment in society.

I am therefore committed to playing an equally active role at university and am thrilled at the prospect of studying a degree in architecture, which will provide the academic basis **to** fulfil my vision in an architecture built as a service to contemporary human needs.

Candidate D Background

Applicant attends an independent international school in Norway, having moved in 2017 from another European international school. The cohort is relatively small (50 in the graduating class). The applicant has secured an academic scholarship on the basis of their outstanding academic achievements.

IB Diploma (Predicted) – 44 points

HL – Visual Arts (7), Physics (7), History (7)

SL – Maths Analysis (6), English A (7), French B (7)

IGCSE (Achieved)

A* (Art and Design, English Literature, French, Science (double award), Mathematics), A (History, English Language)

The reference has been submitted by the School's Guidance Counsellor

The applicant's art teacher indicates that they **"demonstrate extraordinary organisation and planning skills for all their art projects; independently breaking down tasks and setting goals in all parts of the creative process."** The applicant has based their IB project on the topic of 'The built environment and how humans understand and interact with space'. One of their first projects was inspired by their experience on mass transportation in Tokyo. Using their own photos, and ideas from the painter Richard Estes, they experimented with many ways of composing and expressing their own environment and space, which are seen in a Visual Journal. The final painting was a highly realistic and sophisticated painting which showed expertise in mixing subtle colours and tones with paint to depict people, space, and reflections. The applicant documents their ideas and research in a Visual Journal. **"These concepts are explored through a variety of drawings both quick and highly realistic and accompanied with thorough explanations and reflections. For the Comparative Study the applicant chose artworks by Edward Hopper, George Segal, and Zeng Fanzhi, and focused on 'Urban Alienation' to focus the analysis and comparison... [continuing] their investigation of the built environment and its effects on people."** The applicant used their Extended Essay on 'The Behavioural Basis of Design in Cohousing' to pursue their interest in architecture by focusing on one of the few cohousing developments in Norway, Vindmollebakken. **"They read a long list of books on cohousing as well as interviewed one of the architects of the development, created a questionnaire for the residents, and visited the place. It is very rare that I am privileged to have such a dedicated and highly skilled art student in my class."**

The Physics teacher commented **"As a former student and practitioner of architectural engineering myself, I am convinced that they will succeed with their future endeavours in the studies and practice of architecture."** The applicant has consistently maintained an outstanding mark, setting very high standards for their work, is always well focused and prepared to take on new challenges. **"They have the ability to stay calm, collected, and positive - even when the subject matter and problems get very difficult. In laboratory and other group work they are methodical and show attention to detail... they are one of those exceptional students who brings up the people around them."**