

Frequently Asked Questions

B.E.D.S./M.Arch. Program

What do students study in the Bachelor of Environmental Design Studies program?

Although the name refers to “environmental design,” the program focuses on architecture: the creative study of buildings and cities. Each academic term consists of courses in architectural design, representation, history, building technology, and professional practice.

Why is the program divided into BEDS and M.Arch?

The BEDS degree is awarded after two years in the architecture program, acknowledging that some BEDS graduates choose to switch to a related field such as urban planning, building construction, or digital design.

Can I become an architect by doing only the BEDS program?

No, both BEDS and MArch are required. A BEDS degree (or an equivalent pre-professional architecture degree from another university) is the prerequisite for entry to the two-year MArch program, which leads to the professional Master of Architecture degree.

How does Dalhousie compare to other schools?

Dalhousie's BEDS/MArch program is the only architecture program in Canada that includes integrated co-op work terms and a compact schedule that can be completed in three years, eight months. You may wish to ask a professional architect or an architecture graduate about the school's national and international reputation. Some may still know the school as part of the Technical University of Nova Scotia (TUNS), which amalgamated with Dalhousie University in 1997.

What are my chances of being admitted?

The BEDS acceptance rate is about 20%. Accepted students usually have a B+ average (3.30 GPA) and a good portfolio.

How many BEDS graduates are accepted into M.Arch?

There is no quota but usually about 85% are accepted. To be considered for admission, an applicant must have a 3.00 GPA in BEDS design courses, a 3.00 GPA in the BEDS program, and a portfolio that meets graduate expectations.

Where do Dalhousie architecture students come from?

Usually, about 40% are from western Canada, 30% from Atlantic Canada, 20% from Ontario and Quebec, and 10% from other countries. Although two years of university are required for admissions, most incoming students have three to four years of university. Each class includes a diverse set of academic backgrounds: fine arts, science, engineering, computer science, liberal arts, etc. The male/female ratio is usually equal.

How is the sequence of terms organized?

The BEDS/MArch program operates on a trimester system: September to December, January to April, and May to July. The BEDS program consists of three academic terms, one work term, and one more academic term. The MArch program consists of two academic terms, a double work term, and two more academic terms.

How are the work terms organized?

The BEDS program includes a four-month work term and the MArch program includes an eight-month work term. Students typically work in an architectural office in Canada or abroad. Salary depends on experience and location, averaging \$18–\$27 per hour in Canada. The university's Co-op Office helps students find suitable employment. Students arrange their own accommodation.





Can a student major in a particular subject area?

All courses in the BEDS program are required; they provide a foundation for subsequent graduate studies. In the MArch program a student completes additional core courses and electives that may emphasize a particular area such as history, theory, housing, urban design, computer applications, building technology, or representation. Graduate electives also may be taken in other departments at Dalhousie and at the five other universities in Halifax: NSCAD University, St. Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent University, Atlantic School of Theology, and University of King's College.

How can I obtain a university calendar?

The Architecture section of the university calendar is available at academiccalendar.dal.ca > Undergraduate > Architecture and Planning > School of Architecture.

Can I receive a guided tour of the school and meet with an admissions advisor?

Yes. Please go to tinyurl.com/dal-arch-advising to find out when tours and meetings are available.

Can I take architecture courses before applying to the architecture program?

Yes. These introductory architecture courses are open to non-architecture students at the university:

- ARCH 1001.03: Introduction to Architecture 1 (fall)
- ARCH 1002.03: Introduction to Architecture 2 (winter)
- ARCH 1201.03: Science of the Built Environment 1 (fall)
- ARCH 1202.03: Science of the Built Environment 2 (winter)
- ARCH 2501.03: Design Communication 1 (fall)
- ARCH 2502.03: Design Communication 2 (winter)

Taking one or two would be sufficient. They are not BEDS prerequisites and are not intended to help students prepare a BEDS application.

Eligibility

How many courses are needed to fulfil the two-year university requirement for the BEDS program?

At most universities, you would need twenty courses.

Is a two-year diploma or a four-year degree from a community college or institute of technology sufficient for admission?

No, you would also need a year of courses at a university. If you are completing a two-year architectural technology program at a college and are planning to apply for BEDS admission, the shortest route would be to take a year of non-architectural courses at a university, then apply to BEDS. Some colleges in Canada now offer four-year college degrees, but there would be no advantage in continuing for a third and fourth year at the college to obtain a degree, as you would still need to take a year of courses at a university.

Can I apply if I have slightly less than two full years, or if I have not completed all of the prerequisite courses?

Yes. You may be able to complete any remaining courses before beginning the BEDS program in September. Admission would be conditional on passing those courses and submitting a final transcript.

Can a student from the United States study architecture at Dalhousie University?

Yes. A U.S. citizen who graduates from Dalhousie's MArch program can become an architectural intern in the United States and complete the examinations for professional registration there.

Can a student from overseas study architecture at Dalhousie University and return to one's home country to become an architectural intern and a registered architect?

Yes. For details, contact your national architectural organization.

Which subjects should I take in university to prepare for admission to the architecture program?

Many different subjects provide a good basis for architectural studies. No particular program at Dalhousie or elsewhere is a preferred foundation for the BEDS program. Instead, we recommend that you work toward an undergraduate degree in a subject area in which you are liable to do well. Depending on your interests and academic strengths, you may decide to major in a subject such as art, anthropology, engineering, geography, history, mathematics, music, philosophy, or physics. Please check the "Professional Architecture Program" brochure for particular course requirements. To prepare for studio work, all applicants are advised to take a course in free-hand drawing and/or craft (e.g., wood, metal, or ceramics).



How can I find out if a particular course satisfies one of the three prerequisites?

Copy the course description from your university calendar and e-mail it to the School of Architecture: arch.office@dal.ca. We'll review it and send you a response. A humanities or social science course cannot be language instruction or technical instruction; your previous university may recognize it as a humanities course but the School of Architecture may not.

If my average is lower than B-, can I still be admitted?

It's possible. An excellent design portfolio may compensate for an academic record that is slightly lower than B-. If your grades in first year were low but then improved substantially, this will also be considered; however, keep in mind that admission is competitive.

Which English proficiency tests are acceptable for BEDS admission?

Because the BEDS program typically leads to the Master of Architecture program, the School of Architecture uses the English standards of the Faculty of Graduate Studies for admission to both programs: e.g., IELTS 7.0, TOEFL iBT 92. TOEFL Home Edition and IELTS Online are acceptable formats. Another option is to take the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) Level 2 course at Dalhousie's College of Continuing Education and receive a grade of at least A-. A certificate from Duolingo or a language school is not acceptable.

English is not my first language but I've studied at an English-language university for two years. Can the English test score be waived?

No, you must submit an English test score. The English requirement may be waived only if you have completed a full undergraduate degree, depending on whether the subjects you studied included substantial demands on reading and writing.

When does the English language requirement need to be completed?

Your test score (IELTS, TOEFL, etc.) must be submitted with the rest of your BEDS application by March 1. Please plan accordingly.

What does "mature student" status mean?

If you will be 25 or older at the time of registration and have not completed all of the prerequisites for BEDS admission, you may be considered for admission based on alternate qualifications. However, simply being older is not a qualification; equivalent abilities are expected. As the BEDS program begins at a third-year university level, all mature students must have completed at least one full year (ten courses) at a university.

Application

How can I obtain an Architecture admission package?

Please contact the Architecture office. The same admission materials are available on the Architecture web site:

tinyurl.com/undergrad-application.

Must one of my reference letters be from an academic instructor?

Because you are applying to an academic program, a reference from an academic instructor is most useful, preferably at university level. In case this is not possible, a reference from an employer or supervisor is also acceptable.

Should my referees' letters be sent directly to the School of Architecture?

Reference letters are intended to be confidential and must be signed. Whether your referees are using the School's undergraduate reference form (tinyurl.com/dal-arch-reference) or sending their own letter, they can submit it to the School of Architecture by mail, courier, fax, or scanned and e-mailed to arch.office@dal.ca, or saved as a PDF and sent to arch.office@dal.ca. Alternately, they can place it in a sealed envelope, endorse it across the back seal, and return it to you, to include with your application.

What should I include in my design portfolio?

The most common items in a portfolio are graphic images (freehand drawings, paintings, etc.) and photographs of material constructions you have made (furniture, sculpture, etc.). The admissions committee can recognize creativity and artistic skill in a wide range of work; however, travel photos, computer drawings, and technical drafting usually are not good indicators of creativity. Your portfolio must be submitted in digital format, as a PDF.

Can my application be considered if I haven't submitted all of the required items?

No.

When is the BEDS application deadline?

Items for a BEDS application can be submitted any time in January or February. All items must be received by March 1.

I have never studied architecture before. Can I apply directly to the M.Arch program?

No, you should apply to the BEDS program. For students with an undergraduate degree, Dalhousie's two-year BEDS + two-year MArch sequence is comparable to the four-year MArch programs at other Canadian architecture schools.



I have a pre-professional architecture degree from another university. Am I eligible for admission directly to the M.Arch program?

Probably not. Most transfer architecture students with a pre-professional architecture degree (BAS, BED, BES, BSc[Arch], BArchSci, etc.) will need to take one or more senior undergraduate courses during the winter term before applying to begin the MArch program in May. These courses are determined by comparing your previous architectural courses to those in the BEDS program. There are three deadlines each year for transfer applications: February 1, June 1, and October 1. October 1 is the application deadline for admission in the winter term.

When does the M.Arch program begin?

The MArch program starts in the summer term, which begins in early May.

How can I confirm that all of the required items have been received?

You are responsible for checking that the two items sent to the Registrar's Office were received; phone 902 494 2450 or e-mail admissions@dal.ca. The Architecture office will send you an e-mail confirmation only when all required items have been received, indicating that your application is complete. If you have not received confirmation two weeks after submitting the final item, please e-mail arch.office@dal.ca or phone 902 494 3971. (Please disregard the Registrar's online record of items received.)

How does the admission process work?

When the items required by the Registrar's Office are received, your file is forwarded to the School of Architecture and combined with the additional items you send there. Your application is then processed and joins several hundred other applications for review by the admissions committee. The admission process includes several stages and is completed in early May. You will then receive an e-mail message from the School of Architecture. Later you will receive an official letter from the Registrar's Office. Please contact the Architecture office if you change your address or e-mail address.

When will I be notified of the result of my BEDS application?

Admission results are sent by e-mail to applicants in early May.

Should I contact the architecture office to find out if I have been accepted?

No. You will be notified of the admission result as soon as the decision has been made. In the meantime, your status will not have changed, so there will be nothing more to tell you.

What happens if my application is placed on a wait list?

Admission offers are made to 65 students. Additional applicants are placed on a wait list. If some of the initial offers are declined, offers will be made in sequence to waiting applicants. If and when a place becomes available, the Architecture office will contact you. Until then, there will be nothing more to tell you. The wait list remains open until the end of July.

I have completed more than two full years of university. Must I start in the first term (B1)?

Yes. Because each term of the BEDS program includes required architecture courses, entry to a term higher than B1 is possible only if you have completed equivalent architecture courses at another university.

I have completed architectural courses at another university. Can I be admitted to an advanced level in the program?

The admissions committee will review your transcript and your architectural portfolio to consider you for BEDS/MArch admission and for entry to a term higher than B1. Admission and level of entry depend on several factors, including the completion of all BEDS prerequisites (including two years of general studies) and the completion of courses that are equivalent to those in the BEDS program. Please include evidence of course content with your application. Course outlines are preferred but calendar descriptions may be sufficient.

I have been offered a place in the BEDS program. How soon must I accept the offer?

The Registrar's Office requires a \$200 deposit to reserve a place in the program. This should be done promptly to ensure that your place is not given to an applicant on the wait list.

My application was not accepted. Can you tell me why?

With hundreds of applications to review, the School does not keep detailed records on admission decisions. The two most important parts of an application are the academic record and the design portfolio. The School cannot provide evaluation or advice on design portfolios. For this, you should consult a third party.



Financial information

What are the tuition fees and incidental fees?

For current fees, check the School of Architecture web site: tinyurl.com/dal-arch-fees.

Are entrance scholarships available for the BEDS program?

Yes. BEDS applicants are considered for a few partial scholarships. Application forms are sent to applicants with a 3.70 GPA (A- average) or higher; however, students should expect to finance their architectural education through personal funds and/or student loans.

Are entrance scholarships available for the M.Arch program?

Yes. An MArch applicant with an excellent academic record (minimum 3.70 GPA or A- average) may be eligible for a partial tuition scholarship. Some course assistantships are available but do not provide a major source of funding.

Is it possible to maintain a part-time job while studying in the architecture program?

Probably not. The Architecture program is demanding, and students tend to work in the studio on evenings and weekends. For financial advice, go to dal.ca/admissions/money_matters.html.

What is the cost of living like in Halifax?

It's comparable to other small Canadian cities, and substantially lower than larger cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Boston, and London. The university recommends a budget of \$9,000 (Canadian) for accommodation, living expenses, and academic supplies during each academic term. See also tinyurl.com/dal-financial-tips.

Equipment

What equipment and supplies should I bring with me?

A booklet called "Intro to Architecture at Dalhousie" is sent to incoming students during the summer before the BEDS program begins. It includes recommendations for drawing equipment, modeling and construction tools, computer equipment, and architecture books.

What computer facilities are available?

The Faculty has Windows computer labs, large-format scanning and printing equipment, and various peripheral devices and software. Wireless ethernet throughout the building enables students to connect a computer to the Faculty network, printers, and the Internet.

Should I bring my computer to Halifax?

A laptop computer (Windows or Mac) is required for design work in the studio. Specifications are provided at tinyurl.com/dal-arch-computer-specs. If your computer meets these specifications or can be upgraded, you should bring it with you. If it doesn't, you will need to purchase a laptop computer at the beginning of the BEDS program.

Accommodation

Where is the architecture school located?

It's in downtown Halifax, at Spring Garden Road and Brunswick Street, two blocks south of the Halifax Citadel, five blocks west of the Halifax harbour, and next door to the Halifax Central Library. The Faculty of Architecture and Planning and the Faculty of Engineering are on Dalhousie's Sexton Campus, in the middle of Halifax's prime commercial area, with many shops, restaurants, theatres, and other facilities nearby. The main Dalhousie campus is a fifteen-minute walk away. NSCAD University is ten minutes away.

Are university residences available near the architecture school?

Yes. An undergraduate residence, Gerard Hall, is a five-minute walk from the school. It offers co-ed accommodation in a large security building, with furnished single or double rooms, a mandatory meal plan, laundry facilities, and a lounge. Residence fees include a telephone, voice mail, satellite TV access, and high-speed Internet access. The Grad House nearby offers accommodation for graduate or mature students in a 14-unit security building, with furnished rooms, kitchen facilities, an optional meal plan, and access to laundry facilities. For more information on residences, go to tinyurl.com/dal-residence-housing.





What off-campus accommodation is available near the architecture school?

With six universities in Halifax, student accommodation is plentiful, but selection near the school is best in June and July. Most students live in Halifax's South End. For rental costs, go to tinyurl.com/living-in-halifax. For more information on off-campus housing, go to tinyurl.com/dal-residence-housing.

Are short-term apartment sublets available?

Yes. In early August, fall-term sublets are often available from other architecture students who are leaving for their work term. In early January, winter/summer sublets are also available. The Architecture office e-mails sublet information to all incoming architecture students.

Architecture as a profession

What kinds of work does a professional architect do?

A professional architect may participate in a wide range of design activities, depending on areas of interest and expertise: from furnishings and house designs to public buildings and communities; from technical details and material innovation to spatial organization and urban design; and from historic restoration and adaptation to new buildings and speculative projects. A concise description is available from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada: raic.org/raic/becoming-architect.

How long does it take to become a registered architect?

The total is about nine years. This includes two prerequisite years of university, four years at the School of Architecture, and three years of internship (working in an architectural office and preparing for professional examinations).

What are the employment prospects for graduates?

Most Dalhousie graduates are working in architectural offices across Canada and the United States, where employment opportunities have been plentiful in recent years.



FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

Ralph M. Medjuck Building | 5410 Spring Garden Road
PO Box 15000 | Halifax NS B3H 4R2 Canada

Is Dalhousie University's architecture program accredited?

Yes, the Master of Architecture program is fully accredited by the Canadian Architectural Certification Board.

What are the backgrounds and research areas of the faculty members in the School of Architecture?

Please refer to the Faculty page on the Architecture web site: tinyurl.com/dal-arch-faculty.

Architecture graduates

I have a professional architecture degree from another university and wish to do graduate study. What would you recommend?

The School of Architecture currently does not offer a post-professional program. You may wish to check programs at other architecture schools in Canada (tinyurl.com/arch-schools) or the ACSA's guide to architecture schools in North America (studyarchitecture.com). Students who already have a professional architecture degree (e.g., BArch, MArch) are not eligible for admission to Dalhousie's professional Master of Architecture program to complete another professional architecture degree.

I have a professional architecture degree from another country and wish to become registered as an architect in Canada. What would you recommend?

You should contact the Canadian Architectural Certification Board to arrange for your education to be certified in Canada.

The address is: 710 - 1 Nicholas Street, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1N 7B7; phone 613 241 8399; fax 613 241 7991; e-mail info@cacb.ca; web site: cacb.ca

Questions?

Contact the Architecture office:

- ✉ arch.office@dal.ca
- ☎ 902.494.3971 (undergraduate and transfer admissions)
- 902.494.3973 (graduate admissions)
- 📠 902.423.6672

dal.ca/architecture
   @archplan