

7 GRADUATION

7.1 The graduation project: Content

Graduation is the final project that differs from previous design projects during the study programme in a number of respects. Graduation has the character of a 'master's test'. In addition to professional growth, the student at the Academy also undergoes growth in terms of independence and individuality. This independent professional command is also reflected in the graduation project. With regard to the subject choice, assignment formulation, method, composition of the graduation committee, monitoring of the planning and the budget, and the consultation of external experts, the student has control over graduation. The Academy only exerts control with respect to the duration and the assessment of the graduation.

During the graduation process, a number of fixed, public committee meetings are included in order to also give this period a collective component of interaction, exchange, reflection and best practice.

7.1.1 The subject

Through the graduation project, the student demonstrates the ability to determine a subject and formulate a problem statement based on social, spatial and professional developments, and personal fascinations. The choice of subject for the graduation project is free. The subject must, however, enable the student to prove mastery in numerous areas. The subject must, therefore, offer the opportunity to examine a larger area, typology or phenomenon and to find points of reference therein for the spatial elaboration of subareas and/or a concrete object.

A graduation project must remain within the frameworks of a design study programme and the learning outcomes of the professional practice. The graduation subject has no minimum requirement in terms of scale, scope or programme. A small building, area or location can also be the graduation subject if the study of the phenomenon and/or the details and/or the design process contain sufficient depth. However, this places even higher demands on the argumentation and expressive force of the final result.

7.1.2 The graduation plan

In the graduation plan, the choice of subject, the problem statement and the design assignment for the graduation project are substantiated in a convincing manner. The plan goes into the substantive relevance of the graduation subject and the personal considerations of the student. The expectation is that the subject, research and design assignment are sufficiently anchored in both a (professional) theoretical framework and a broader social context. The student is expected to be aware of research and design on the same subject by others and to be able to compare their own work to that.

The graduation plan is not a technical document, but is a design in a certain sense. It must, therefore, convey genuine enthusiasm for the chosen subject and be convincing in terms of the chosen approach. The method and the final products are clearly described in the graduation plan. If the final product is part of the search, the way in which the final products are determined is, in any case, clearly described.

The graduation plan contains references to relevant reference projects and knowledge sources.

7.1.3 The graduation project

On the basis of the assignment (the graduation plan), a design is made in which the mastery of the subject discipline is demonstrated in a convincing way. It is essential that the student

shows a grasp of the different steps in the design process. The student must show in their design that certain investigations, studies and elaborations have been carried out in an effective way. The choice of certain elaborations and the chosen level of detail, as well as the forms of presentation, must be convincing. The argumentation comprehensible, coherent and convincing. The final design must be of a high aesthetic quality. The picture sketched flows logically from the established assignment and is authentic.

7.2 The graduation project: Process

The maximum duration of the graduation process is 42 weeks. Graduation is worth 30 European Credits (ECTS). This corresponds to 20 hours of study per week. The approval of the graduation plan by the board of studies is the start of the graduation process (see the Graduation Clock)

Graduation plans are handled twice per year in a special meeting of the board of studies:

1. In September 2023; the Final Examination takes place in the week of 11 July 2024 (1st shift).
2. In February 2024; the Final Examination takes place in the week of 9 January 2025 (2nd shift).

Graduation plans must be handed in to the study secretariat of the Academy at least 14 working days before the planned meeting of the board of studies.

7.2.1 The graduation clinic

The graduation clinic leads to the choice of graduation subject and an accompanying graduation proposal with which the student can answer the questions: where, what, for whom and why.

During the graduation clinic, the student consults with the head of the study programme concerned about the graduation plan on the basis of the assessment form and the O6 paper. The possibilities for graduation are explored here and the choice of committee and the mentor in particular are discussed. The student gains insight into the list of mentors who are proposed by the Academy. The structure for the graduation proposal is written. The graduation clinic consists of six sessions. During the first and second session, the following is discussed:

- the substantive and professional ambitions of the student;
- the choice of mentor and the other possible graduation committee members;
- the available study time;
- the report from the Comprehensive Annual Assessment 3;
- choice of subject and location;
- a planning document in which the ambitions, fields of research, excursions, interviews, literature and the production of drawings and scale models are recorded in time, a roadmap of the graduation.

7.2.2 The graduation planning

On commencement of the graduation, the student is provided with an overall planning from the Academy in which all formal moments, including the committee meetings, are recorded. This planning is not yet specifically focused on the personal graduation plan of the student. On the basis of the graduation plan, a personal planning is made by the student within the graduation planning of the Academy, which forms a formal part of the graduation plan.

7.2.3 Approval of the graduation plan

The graduation plan must be approved by the board of studies. The graduation plan can be approved if it is, in any case, provided with information supporting the choice of the subject, a problem statement and a design assignment. In addition, a clear working method is necessary.

The student makes a proposal for the two additional committee members in the graduation plan. The mentor is already known by then. These two additional committee members have been approached and have reacted positively.

If the committee members have not yet definitively confirmed or the committee is not approved, the student makes a definitive proposal for the graduation committee, in consultation with the mentor, within a week after the consideration of the plan by the board of studies. If the graduation plan or the composition of the graduation committee is approved by the board of studies or if there is reason for changing the plan, the head of department will contact the student. The student can then submit an amended graduation plan for approval within a week.

7.2.4 Presentation of the graduation plan – Committee 0

After discussing the graduation plan, the board of studies organises a first public meeting where the students, present and defend the graduation subject, the problem statement and the elaboration of this into a concrete assignment (with location and programme). During the public meeting, the students also propose the definitive graduation committee. After this presentation, the board of studies definitively approves the plans including committees.

If a plan is not approved, the student can register for the following shift.

The presentation of the graduation plan and participation in the debate are a compulsory part of the graduation project. In addition to the mentor, the other committee members are also welcome.

7.2.5 Graduation Thursdays

Thursday is the day on which the Academy is open to the graduating students. In addition to the meetings organised by the Academy, there is also the graduation studio. Public presentations also take place on Thursday evening, during which graduating students present their graduation project and receive their degree certificate.

Graduation studio

In addition to the spaces at the Distelweg, spaces are also reserved for all graduating students at the Academy at the Waterlooplein every Thursday evening. Graduating students come to the Academy on this fixed evening in the week to work on their graduation project, to discuss developments with each other and to exchange ideas.

Thematic sessions

Every academic year, the Academy organises three thematic Graduation Thursdays. The students choose at least two evenings to attend during their graduation shift. The thematic structure anticipates the various phases of development in which graduation projects may be. The theme evenings are announced at the start of the academic year. These evenings usually require little or no preparation time from the student. The intention is to inspire and to provide a fresh outlook on graduation. These evenings are also suitable for students who have been busy with their graduation longer than a year.

Mentors' meeting

The mentors' meeting takes place around six months after the start of the graduation. The meeting with mentors is intended as a moment of inspiration and a time for reflection on the current work of the students within the context of the development of their graduation project. During the meeting, the student gives a short presentation (max. 10 min.) to the other students and mentors in a group composed beforehand.

During this presentation, the student presents the translation of their concept into a clear design proposal that forms the point of departure for the elaboration of the graduation project. After the presentation, there is room for an open discussion between both mentors and students from that group (max. 20 min.). One of the mentors acts as chairperson in each group.

Should the mentor be unable to attend, another committee member takes over their duties. Participation in these mentors' meeting is a compulsory part of the graduation process. The presentation and the meeting in response to the work are explicitly a time for reflection and not an assessment moment. They are not taken into account in the final assessment of the graduation.

7.2.6 Committee meetings

The student includes four committee meetings in the graduation plan schedule. These are four meetings during which the student presents their work to the graduation committee. The first committee (Comm. 1) is organised by the Academy immediately after the presentation and approval of the graduation plan during the Committee 0. During the final fourth committee (Comm. 4), the graduation committee gives authorisation to the student to sit the Final Examination.

7.2.7 Final Examination

The Final Examination concludes the graduation project. The research and the design are presented during The Final Examination. The student provides insight into all the phases that have been passed through and the qualities of the design. For an explanation of The Final Examination, please see section 6.6 of this study guide.

7.2.8 Public presentation of the graduation project and the graduation ceremony

Before the graduation ceremony, the Examination Board assesses whether the student has passed all the study components and assessments connected with the study programme and satisfied the practical requirement. If this condition has been met, the study secretariat determines a date (generally a Thursday evening or Friday afternoon), in consultation with the student and the Graduation Committee, for a public presentation of the graduation work. This is the final presentation of the graduation process.

At this meeting, the graduation mentor explains the assessment of the Graduation Committee on the basis of its final report and the graduation ceremony takes place. The presentation is a compulsory part of the graduation process and takes place on the Academy premises. It is not possible for the public presentation and graduation ceremony to take place at an external location. The student is responsible for the organisation of this presentation. The date is coordinated through the study secretariat. After the public presentation of the graduation plan, the graduation project is made public via the website of the Academy. Participation in the annual Graduation show is also compulsory.

7.3 The graduation project: the committee

7.3.1 The graduation committee

The graduation committee consists of three members, including the graduation mentor. The members are active practitioners in their own professional field and the composition is tailored to the design assignment. Depending on the subject, one of the members can, if supported by reasons, be employed in a different discipline. One condition for this is that the committee member in question has an affinity with design. A working or personal relationship may not exist between the student and the mentor or committee members.

The members of the graduation committee have clearly defined roles. The graduation mentor is the constant factor, guardian of the general level of quality and the confidential adviser of the student, and the mentor's duties are described above. The role of the committee members is to contribute specific skills and/or knowledge to the project.

The graduation committee meets at least four times as a committee during the graduation project. See the graduation clock for this. In consultation with the graduation mentor, the student can make individual appointments with the committee members. The committee members are also welcome at the special graduation Thursdays.

The student is responsible for the progress and following their own planning. The meetings with the graduation committee take place on the Thursday agreed for that purpose on the Academy premises and are a compulsory part of the graduation process.

7.3.2 The graduation mentor

The student chooses a graduation mentor during the graduation clinic in consultation with the head of department.

The graduation mentor must be familiar with the requirements that the Academy of Architecture sets for graduation. Additionally, the graduation mentor must have previously been a member of a Graduation Committee and have been approved as examiner by the Examination Board. The graduation mentor has a title in the discipline in which the student is studying (or graduating).

The graduation mentor acts as the student's coach and confidential adviser during the graduation process.

The graduation mentor:

- supervises the further elaboration of the graduation plan during the graduation clinic;
- supervises the definitive formulation of the design assignment;
- supervises the composition of the graduation committee;
- is the chairperson of the graduation committee and based on that role consults, where necessary, with the board of studies, the examination board and/or the study adviser;
- is available for the committee meetings on the Thursday designated for that purpose in the annual planning;
- is responsible for filling in the report and the form to the committees;
- monitors the progress over time of the graduation project and reports in writing on the committee meetings to the board of studies by means of the form available for that purpose;
- is secretary of the committee of examiners during the Final Examination session and reports on this session in writing to the board of studies and the examination board.

Generally speaking, a designer who is involved in a similar assignment at the same location cannot be a graduation mentor.

The board of studies will, after the discussion of and public presentation of the graduation plans, confirm the approval of the plan and the choice of graduation mentor and committee members by means of a letter to the student and committee members.

7.3.3 Fee for the graduation committee

The graduation mentor and the members of the graduation committee receive a fixed fee for their work. This fee is expressed in lecture units and confirmed in writing by the Academy. One lecture unit is equal to 3.6 hours of teaching.

The mentor receives a total of 8 lecture units:

- for the preparation of the graduation plan;
- for individual supervision;
- for attending and reporting on four committee meetings;
- for attending the mentors' meeting;
- for conducting and reporting on the Final Examination.

The other members of the graduation committee receive five lecture units for the committee meetings, the individual supervision sessions and attending Final Examination, whereby the payment of a committee meeting is covered by part of the lecture unit. After completion of the four committee meetings, the student is not, in principle, entitled to supervision anymore. The committee is, however, free to still supervise the student during the extra study time.

Upon request, two lecture units are available to bring in two external advisers. The student personally decides whether or not these two lecture units will be used.

The additional examiners for the Final Examination are remunerated separately with one lecture unit per examiner.

Payment of the fee takes place after the Final Examination. After successfully completing the Final Examination, the student should communicate to the study secretariat if the allocation of the available lecture units needs to be revised.

7.4 The graduation project: Committee meetings

7.4.1 The four committee meetings

During the graduation year, the Academy organises committee meetings on at fixed times. Committee meetings 1 and 4 are fixed, while committee meetings 2 and 3 can be planned and organised by the student. All committee members attend these meetings. Participation in these meetings is a compulsory part of the graduation project. The student presents the progress of the work to the graduation committee during these committee meetings. These evenings are also suitable for taking a look at the graduation process of fellow students from that shift and the progress thereof. It is an opportunity for fellow and/or prospective graduates from another class to take a look behind the scenes of a graduation project.

7.4.2 The first committee meeting

Approximately three weeks after the plan presentation, the completion of the research and analysis stage is presented in the first committee meeting. An attempt at a draft research must also be visible then. The date of this meeting is fixed.

The result of the first committee meeting is recorded by the Academy in a short feedback form in which there are instructions for the subsequent stage.

7.4.3 The second committee meeting

The second committee meeting can be seen as the start to the Provisional Design. The first steps towards elaboration of the concept in concrete design must then be visible. The date and the location for this meeting are determined and organised by the student.

The result of the second committee meeting is recorded by the Academy in a feedback form in which there are instructions for the subsequent stage.

If it appears that the student cannot fulfil the planning drawn up by the Academy, the student can fine-tune/change the plan and/or committee composition and start again at the next shift in September or February. This does not necessarily mean that the student

will start from scratch. Consultation with the head of department and the study adviser is always necessary.

7.4.4 The third committee meeting

The third committee forms the start of the Definitive Design. The design will then be broadly outlined and will be further elaborated/tested in the coming weeks. The date and the location for this meeting are determined and organised by the student.

The result of the third committee meeting is recorded by the Academy in a feedback form in which there are instructions for the subsequent stage.

Two weeks after the period in which the third committee meetings should have taken place, the mentor and student receive a written request from the Academy to specify whether the planned date for the fourth committee meeting is feasible. If more time is needed in order to arrive at the fourth committee meeting, the student submits a extension request. There are two possibilities: 8 or 16 week extension. The dates for these extra fourth committee meetings are fixed. The planned date for the Final Examination will therefore be shifted.

7.4.5 The fourth committee meeting

During the fourth committee meeting, the three members of the graduation committee assess the graduation project together. The definitive design must be ready by then to such an extent that the student can focus in the final part of graduation on making the project clear and presentable.

The result of the fourth committee meeting is recorded by the Academy in a feedback form in which there are instructions for the subsequent stage. It also includes recommendations from the graduation committee about the completion of the graduation projects for both the student and the board of studies.

Should a student not satisfy the requirements that the Academy sets for the fourth committee at that time, the Graduation Committee may specify that on the final fourth committee meeting form. The student will draw up a new planning, in consultation with the mentor, within two weeks after the final fourth committee meeting, because the student is falling behind. This is submitted and discussed with the study adviser. The study adviser will bring up that postponement request and new planning for discussion during the meeting of the board of studies. On the basis of the request, the new planning and the remaining study time, the board of studies decides if the extension will be granted. The study secretariat will inform the student in writing of the outcome of the extension request within two weeks after the meeting of the board of studies.

7.5 In the event of illness/ inability to attend

The student and mentor attend all committee meetings. Should the student be ill/ unable to attend, the student has to cancel well in advance via the study secretariat and request a new date in consultation with the mentor. The student must make an appointment for this with the study adviser.

The point of departure is that the student is back on course and has caught up with the rest by the next planned committee meeting from the graduation clock

If the student has not caught up by the next planned meeting, the student reports that and an appointment is made with the head of department and the study adviser.

Should the mentor be ill/ unable to attend, another committee member can take over the mentor's duties for all meetings except the Final Examination. This occurs in consultation with the Academy.

7.6 Graduation project: Planning (the graduation clock)



