

## 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

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. At the start of the 1st semester 2024-2025; the Final Examination of those students takes place in July at the end of the 2nd semester 2024-2025 (1st shift).
2. At the start of the 2nd semester 2024-2025; the Final Examination of those students takes place in January at the end of the 1st semester 2024-2025 (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 proposal

During the graduation clinic in the third year, the choice of the graduation subject and an accompanying graduation proposal is formulated, in which the student can answer the questions: where, what, for whom and why (see the course description in the third year).

During the graduation clinic, the student consults with the department head about the graduation plan on the basis of the assessment form and the O6 paper. During the graduation clinic, the possibilities for graduation are explored, the choice of committee and the mentor in particular are discussed, and the structure for the graduation proposal is written.

### 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

On Thursday nights, the Academy is open to the graduating students. Thematic sessions and the mentors' meetings that are organised by the Academy all take place on Thursday nights.

#### **Graduation studio**

In addition to the spaces at the Distelweg, spaces are also available to all graduating students at the Academy at the Waterlooplein on Thursday evenings. 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 two 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. 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. Committee 0 is for the presentation and approval of the graduation plan. The first committee (Committee 1) is organised by the Academy soon after this. During the final fourth committee (Committee 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.

### 7.2.8 Public presentation of the graduation project and the graduation ceremony

Shortly after the Final Examination, the study secretariat will contact the student to set a date for the public presentation; generally a Thursday evening or Friday afternoon. This is the final presentation of the graduation process and the graduation work of the student. At this meeting, the graduation mentor explains the assessment of the graduation committee on the basis of its final report. To conclude, the graduation ceremony takes place.

The public presentation is a compulsory part of the graduation process and takes place on the Academy premises. It is not possible for the public presentation to take place at an external location. The student is responsible for the organisation of this presentation in coordination with the study secretariat. In addition to the public presentation, the graduation project is made public via the website of the Academy (the graduate profile) and presented during the Graduation Weekend. Participation in the annual Graduation Weekend 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.

A member or mentor can participate in a maximum of four graduation committees per graduation shift. 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 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 confirm the approval of the plan and the choice of graduation mentor and committee members by means of a confirmation 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 (CE) and confirmed in writing by the Academy. One lecture unit is equal to 3 hours of teaching and 0.6 hours of preparation.

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;
- for attending and speaking at the public presentation.

The other members of the graduation committee receive five lecture units (CE) for the committee meetings, the individual supervision sessions and attending the Final Examination. 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. The student will make sure that the result of every committee meeting is recorded in the student's file in Educator, with feedback and feedforward instructions from the committee for the next phase.

### 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.

### 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.

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 meeting marks 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.

### 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 student will make sure that the result of the fourth committee meeting is recorded in the student's file in Educator, with feedback and feedforward instructions from the committee for the next phase. 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 online fourth committee meeting form. The student will draw up a new planning, in consultation with the mentor.

### 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 and plan a new date in consultation with the mentor. The student should inform the study secretariat about the new date.

### 7.6 Final Examination

#### 7.6.1 Planning

The Final Examination concludes the entire Master's programmes in Architecture, Urbanism or Landscape Architecture.

As a rule, the student is given the opportunity to take the Final Examination four times per year. Please see the graduation clock in this Study Guide. Individual exceptions can be made upon request. Final Examinations are administered by Examination Committees, composed of a selected list of assessors and examiners. This list is determined by the Examination Board annually.

Staff, lecturers and students of the study programme are allowed to be present as observers when the Examination Committee conducts a Final Examination. The deliberations of the Examination Committees and Examination Board are closed.

#### 7.6.2 Conditions for taking the Final Examination

The Final Examination may only be taken if the Comprehensive Annual Assessments 1, 2 and 3 have been passed and all course components from the first, second and third year, with respect to both the internal curriculum and the professional experience component are successfully completed and the 840 hours professional experience of the fourth years have been completed and the fourth and also final assessment of the professional experience has been successfully completed.

By way of derogation, the Examination Board of the Academy of Architecture can, at the request of the student, grant written permission, in exceptional cases and under conditions to be stipulated by the board, to take the examination, also if all parts of the internal curriculum and the professional experience component have not yet been successfully completed.

A 4th year student can have the professional experience assessed two times per year, during the regular assessment evenings in April and, on request, in December.

The assessment of the professional experience of a 4th year student is an integral assessment of the professional experience gained during the study. During this fourth and final assessment of the professional experience, the student presents relevant work from all four years of professional experience and thus demonstrates that the professional qualifications as described in the external curriculum have been acquired.

In principle, the Final Examination follows on from a positive recommendation from the graduation committee in relation to the completeness of the graduation work shown at the fourth committee meeting. However, the student is entitled to request this examination on

their own authority. For other types of exceptions and the consequences of not passing the examination, please refer to the Education and Examination Regulations of the Academy of Architecture.

### 7.6.3 Composition and role of the Examination Committee

The Examination Board puts together a committee of examiners: the Examination Committee. The Examination Committee consists of the graduation mentor and two 'additional' members to be appointed by the Examination Board. The committee is chaired by one of these 'additional' members; the mentor is secretary and arranges the Final Examination report. The Examination Committee assesses one student per session.

The two other members of the graduation committee are also invited for the Final Examination. They have the right to speak, but are not entitled to vote with respect to the final assessment.

It is the role of the Examination Committee to assess, on the basis of the oral presentation of the graduation project and the written record thereof, if the student has satisfied the learning outcomes of the study programme and is ready to practice the profession completely independently.

A precondition for the examination is that there may not be an employer-employee relationship with one of the committee members. If this turns out to be the case following announcement of the grouping, the committee member or the student must report this to the study secretariat and a different grouping will be made.

### 7.6.4 Final Examination result

On the evening of the examination, the student is informed orally by the committee of the provisional result.

Two possibilities exist for the result:

1. **Positive:** the Examination Committee is of the opinion that the student has satisfied the learning outcomes.
2. **Negative:** the Examination Committee is of the opinion that the student has not satisfied the learning outcomes.

If the Examination Committee assesses the project negatively based on content-related grounds, the student can submit a request for re-examination to the Examination Board. One condition is that the available study time and the validity of examinations already passed permit this and any further requirements set by the Board of Studies or Examination Board are met. This in accordance with the Education and Examination Regulations of the Academy of Architecture.

Following agreement on the Final Examination assessment form and the graduation booklet by the Board of Studies, the provisional result of the Final Examination will be definitively recorded by the Examination Board.

The final result will then be communicated in writing to the student.



### 7.6.5 Appeals regulations

If the student believes that a procedural error was made during the Final Examination by virtue of which the result is negative, the student can submit a reasoned request for a reassessment to the Examination Board. See articles 15 and 16 of the Education and Examination Regulations and section 2.10 of this study guide for these regulations.

In addition, there is the option to lodge an official appeal with the Examinations Appeals Board (COBEX) of the AHK against a decision of or on behalf of the Examination Board. More information about the Examinations Appeals Board can be obtained from the study adviser and at the Service Bureau of the AHK.

### 7.6.6 Form of the examination

The Final Examination consists of an oral explanation of the work produced during the fourth year: 'the graduation project'.

During a discussion between the student and the Examination Committee, whether the student satisfied the learning outcomes of the study programme is verified. The subjects and lines of approach of the discussion are indicated on the 'Final Examination Assessment Form' and the overview of the learning outcomes for the Master's programmes in Architecture, Urbanism or Landscape Architecture respectively.

The Final Examination always takes place individually. The Examination Committee consists of three members.

It is customary for the student to send information in advance to the 'additional' examiners. The programme of the examination session has four main components:

1. Preparation for the session and/or hanging up and arranging the work.
2. Presentation of the study results and answering the questions of the committee (60 minutes per student).
3. The deliberations of the committee in which the committee records its final assessment by filling in the Final Examination assessment form.
4. Feedback from the final assessment and a detailed explanation thereof to the student.

After the Final Examination session, the mentor arranges that the following things are handed in to the study secretariat on the same day for the purpose of processing by the Board of Studies and recording the result by the Examination Board:

- the graduation booklet of the student;
- the completed and signed Final Examination assessment form

The graduation booklet must be present during the Final Examination and handed in to the study secretariat together with the Final Examination assessment form on the evening of the Final Examination. The mentor has a maximum of two weeks time after the Final Examination to submit the written Final Examination report. This report should be sent to the study secretariat who will make the report available to the Board of Studies and the student. With the graduation booklet, the assessment form and the written Final Examination report, the graduation can be officially confirmed after which the degree certificate can be issued and the graduation procedure can be finalised.

The Examination Committee may propose the designation 'cum laude' by filling in the Cum Laude proposal form. This is only a recommendation; the student should not be informed about this.

### 7.6.7 The graduation booklet

During the Final Examination, the student is required to hand in printed booklets of the graduation project to both the Examination Committee and the study secretariat. The booklet consists of, at least, a substantiation of the subject choice, the statement of a problem, the design assignment and a presentation of the design. The Board of Studies and the Examination Board only accept reports from the Final Examination in conjunction with the printed graduation booklet.. The booklet is entered into the educational archive of the Academy and made accessible in the library. A digital version of the booklet is published on the Academy page on ISSUU (<https://issuu.com/bouwkunst>).

### 7.6.8 The designation 'cum laude'

The examination committee may propose the designation 'cum laude' if:

- there is excellence in all areas of the discipline;
- the graduation project has a unique and groundbreaking character;
- there is an exceptional graduation project;
- there is an exceptional level of reflection by the student on their own graduation work and position in the field;
- all assessment categories are assessed as good or excellent on the Final Examination assessment form.

For the conferral of the designation 'cum laude', a unanimous recommendation from the examination committee is necessary. The recommendation must be substantiated on the Cum Laude proposal form with well-written argumentation referring to the above-mentioned criteria. This form should be submitted to the study secretariat on the evening of the Final Examination, together with the Final Examination assessment form and the graduation booklet.

The Examination Board decides definitively if the student is awarded the designation 'cum laude' on the basis of the documents and after having consulted the department head. The student is not informed of the recommendation of the examination committee on the night of the Final Examination and the student is also not informed about the final decision of the Examination Board. The awarding and announcement of this take place only at the public presentation.

### 7.6.9 Exception clause

The Examination Board decides in cases not described in these regulations.

## 7.7 Graduation project: Planning (the graduation clock)



