


Master of Arts BFH / HES-SO in Architecture – studying from a different perspective

Bern University of Applied Sciences
Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering



joint master
of architecture





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Hes·so
Haute Ecole Spécialisée
de Suisse occidentale
Fachhochschule Westschweiz
University of Applied Sciences
Western Switzerland

joint master
of architecture

Three partner institutions offer the “Joint Master of Architecture” course: the Bern University of Applied Sciences Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering (BUAS), the School of Engineering and Architecture of Fribourg (EIA-FR) and hepia Geneva – Technology architecture and landscape. The course has a distinct international outlook: not only is a good amount of the teaching done in English, but there are guest lectures by world renowned experts as well as student exchange programmes. Furthermore, a strong focus is placed on practical relevance, so that the students are all involved in research projects. It is this and the characteristic interlinking of diverse personalities, ideas and approaches that make the Joint Master of Architecture course unique in Switzerland.

The master course equips students with the professional skills required to work on architectural competitions, from the analysis to the submission of a competitive project. Students develop their constructive thinking required to realise architectural projects and train their leadership skills. If successful, they leave with the expertise and interpersonal skills that enable them to lead their own teams or set up their own businesses. Graduates hold an internationally recognised title which allows them to work abroad and take part in international competitions. ●

Bern University of Applied Sciences

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The Bern University of Applied Sciences Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering offers the following degree courses

Bachelor

- of Arts in Architecture
- of Science in Civil Engineering
- of Science in Wood Engineering

Master

- of Arts in Architecture (coop. with the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland)
- of Engineering in Wood Technology (coop. with the University of Applied Sciences of Rosenheim, Germany)
- of Science in Engineering (coop. with Switzerland's Universities of Applied Sciences)

Master of Advanced Studies

- MAS Timber Construction
- MAS Preservation of historical Buildings, Restoration and Conversion
- MAS in sustainable Construction
- MAS Energy Engineer Buildings

Diplomas of Advanced Studies (DAS)

Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS)

The affiliated Technical College HF for Wood in Biel offers the following courses

Advanced technical courses

- Technical diploma in Wood Construction
- Technical diploma in Wood Technology
- Technical diploma in Wood Industry
- Post-diploma course in Business Management

Professional and higher Specialist examinations

- Timber Construction Supervisor
- Timber Construction Supervisor Senior, Timber Construction Supervisor with Federal Technical Qualification
- Timber Construction Supervisor with Federal Diploma
- Wood Specialist with Federal Technical Qualification

The range of services offered by Research and Development (R+D) covers

- Application-oriented R+D in every area of study
- Contract Services
- Accredited testing: Each laboratory is accredited by the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS) in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025. The tests are internationally recognised.
- Knowledge and technology transfer

What is the Joint Master of Architecture course?

Structure and length of course: The course consists of three regular semesters, a field trip and a master's thesis on a topic chosen by the student. The Joint Master of Architecture takes two years of full-time study and three to four years part-time. Students must acquire 120 credits, which corresponds to around 3600 hours of work. Students who complete the course are awarded the title of "Master of Arts BFH/HES-SO in Architecture".

Cooperation: The unique profile of the Joint Master of Architecture arises from synergies between the three institutions offering the course. Each specialises in a particular area of competence:

- **Infraurbanism, infratourism and sustainable architecture in wood:** Bern University of Applied Sciences Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering
- **Domesticity:** School of Engineering and Architecture, Fribourg
- **Urban Conditions:** hepia Geneva – Technology architecture and landscape

Mobility: Theory seminars are concentrated into three weeks of each semester and take place in each of the three locations alternately. This concept allows the course to cover a broad range of ground, and provides choices. Theory teaching is carried out mostly in English, but students are allowed to present their projects also in German or French. Students are reimbursed for travel costs.

International study: The "Master of Arts BFH//HES-SO in Architecture" is accredited by the Federal Office for Education and Technology. Agreements with partner institutions in Aalborg, Ahmedabad, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Brussels, Dresden, Lisbon, Monterrey, Paris, Sevilla, Shanghai and Tokyo allow students to spend up to two semesters studying abroad.

Multilingualism and intercultural exchange: The course promotes multilingualism, offering ideal conditions for optimal communication and cooperation within international teams. This constant exposure to various cultural influences increases the students' awareness and promotes intellectual mobility. A meeting to discuss experiences is held once a year with an international steering group, made up of experts from France, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Practical education: The teaching staff and guest lecturers in the Joint Master of Architecture programme offer an education that is oriented towards practical application. The aim is to educate architects who think in terms of interconnections, who can develop solutions for new problems and do so creatively and responsibly.

Work and study – made-to-measure education: The course is set up as a series of modules, allowing each student an individually calibrated curriculum, adapted to the most varied requirements. As the workload changes, so the part-time models can be modified as the course continues. ●

Project studios

The project studios are the core teaching modules of the Joint Master of Architecture. Within the project studios students analyse and develop research topics on real tasks. In doing so, students work together with experts and students from other disciplines. The core topics of the project studios are:

Infraurbanism: Traffic infrastructures are treated as a motor for current urban and architectural developments and form the basis of the research. Over the course of more than one semester, the project deals with current urban and architectural developments. Urbanisation is particularly marked along transport routes, especially where various forms of transport run parallel in close proximity. The studio consequently focuses on developments in urban building and territorial projects alongside transport infrastructure. Switzerland, with its extremely dense transport network, offers an almost ideal field for experimentation in the area of INFRA-URBANISM. Projects on the busy transport nodes of Wankdorf City and Kirchberg Far West are examples of such projects. Every semester, students develop a potential urban project for these areas.

Infratourism: The theme of this research is tourism as a stimulator of migratory movements and a medium for cultural transfers. Increasingly, tourism is breaking out of its traditional boundaries. To create relevant development strategies, the various transitory effects of tourism, based on current trends, are being investigated and critically considered for their social and cultural implications, as is the significance of existing buildings and spaces in the landscape. The focus is directed at the "atmospheric quality" of the spaces shaped by travellers, the local population and those who provide services. Attention is also given to touristic "landscapes of experience", where desires and needs are created and must simultaneously be met.

Sustainable architecture in wood: Recent years have seen an increase in technical possibilities in terms of wood construction, and a strong trend towards sustainability. These are developments very much fostered by clients' needs. Not unlike a hundred years ago, when the invention of reinforced concrete brought about new architectural forms, it is engineers and construction firms who lead the way. However, so as to ensure architectural quality, among other things, architects and schools addressing these new developments are called for.

With its expertise in wood construction, the Bern University of Applied Sciences Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering is in the unique position of providing research and teaching in this field in a single location. This knowledge is imparted and further developed in the course of the studio work.

elope

One of the key competences of today's university graduates is interdisciplinary and cross-cultural teamwork. elope (embedded learning-oriented project environment) provides a learning and teaching environment which enables the students of the master programme to gain first hand experience with this kind of teamwork. The implementation of a real project with actual clients is central to elope's concept. An international network of partner universities provides the framework for cooperation between students of various disciplines via multimedia and information technology. Generally speaking, elope addresses the thematic focus of architecture and health. ●

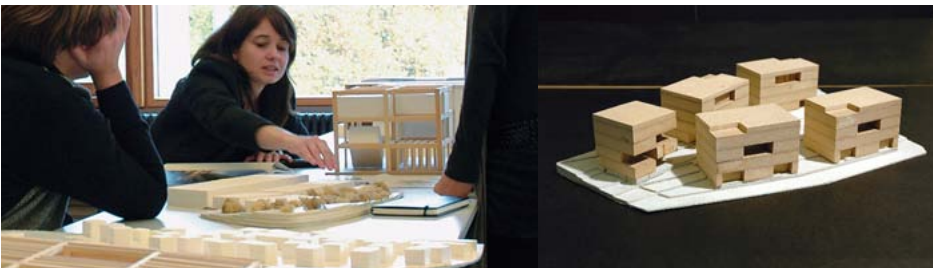
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Theory seminars

The project studios are complemented by theory seminars that reflect the current situation in terms of architectural practice and theoretical discourse. They offer insights into the theory of architectural design, town planning and aesthetics of architecture. In these seminars, students discuss current positions in architecture and other cultural disciplines.

The theory seminars in Burgdorf survey the work area and the working environment of architecture. Careful consideration is given in lectures, debates and workshops to current changes in the social, economic and cultural environment, so as to pinpoint new opportunities for architectural work arising from these changes. The concept of architecture as a creative discipline that is interlinked with other disciplines, but with architectural design at its core, forms the fundamental element of the seminars.

The seminar **“S1 transformation + methods”** aims to raise the students’ awareness of current changes to the built environment and reflects traditional and new architectural working methods. The seminar **“S4 office + context”** discusses current themes within the theoretical discourse of architecture and test strategies of communication. The seminar **“S7 creative cluster”** concentrates on interdisciplinary themes such as the theory of space, aesthetic sustainability and strategies of creative design. ●



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Master’s Thesis / Profile Search

Master’s Thesis: The master’s thesis is the modern equivalent of the medieval apprentice’s journeyman’s piece: it shows what the student has learnt. It consists of a design project and a theoretical paper complementing it and drawing on such related areas as art, the humanities and social and natural sciences. At the end of the course, students are able to demonstrate their newly acquired abilities and competencies independently and in depth, and apply these concretely to a complex architectural project. Each student frames a question on an architectural theme and then spends a semester scrutinising and pursuing it strategically. The student is responsible for each step, from analysis to implementation, the inclusion of elements of research, the final presentation and the involvement of external experts.

The thesis requires an entire semester for full-time students. Part-time students may extend this to one year. The theme is formulated autonomously by the student, is refined with input from lecturers and anchored with a binding timetable. Students start to look for suitable themes and issues and tackle the basic texts and methods in the Profile Search modules from the very beginning of the course. During the rest of the course, this search is part of the continuous preparation for the final thesis.

Profile Search: The Profile Search module is an important instrument for shaping the progress of the individual student’s study. It helps to prepare the master’s thesis and is divided into two parts: the first semester is reserved for taking stock, gathering materials and introducing subjects and methods. In the second semester students formulate their main interests and familiarise themselves with academic methods of analysis. Students practise and improve their academic skills (research and essay writing) in a seminar on academic methods. ●

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Events

Field trip: “He who lives, sees much. He who travels, sees more”, says the Arabic proverb. Students on the master’s course spend a week abroad in which they focus intensively on a city, an urban region or a stretch of countryside. Their eye is trained on issues outside their familiar environment as they conduct research into and analysis of the architecture, urban and space planning, landscaping and culture of the unfamiliar location. Their impressions and experience are evaluated and documented so as to be used for personal reflection in further project studio work.

Exhibitions, lectures and publications: Lectures with invited guests from both practical and theoretical backgrounds in architecture and other disciplines are held regularly on topical focal points. Furthermore, exhibitions of project and thesis work give students and the public a chance to see work done as part of the Joint Master of Architecture course. Last but not least, a magazine called “active construction” is issued three times a year, reflecting and publishing the content and research focus of the Joint Master of Architecture course. ●

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Research

Research and teaching are closely linked in the Joint Master of Architecture course at Burgdorf. On the one hand, students’ designs are meant to trigger new research projects, while pre-existing research projects are further developed by students’ input. The studio motto “Project as research, research as project” sums up an approach to work that combines design and research activities in architectural and urbanistic projects. The research unit’s interdisciplinary transfer of knowledge and technology forms an interface between application-oriented research and teaching, as well as internal and external institutions and private organisations and companies.

The Joint Master of Architecture course focuses on three thematic research activities summarised under the term of “Territorial Identities”: infraurbanism, infratourism and sustainable architecture in wood.

The initial problems and research issues deal with the realities of architectural, socio-economic and cultural practice. Newly acquired knowledge gained through interdisciplinary cooperation with partners flows back into teaching and practice, directly or indirectly benefiting specific groups or society as a whole. ●





Module plan Joint Master of Architecture

Full-time studies

1st Semester	2nd Semester	3rd Semester	4th Semester	Credits
S1 bu (3)	S4 bu (3)	S7 bu (3)	T bu	1
				2
				3
S2 fr (3)	S5 fr (3)	S8 fr (3)		4
				5
				6
S3 ge (3)	S6 ge (3)	S9 ge (3)		7
				8
				9
Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)	Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)	Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)		10
				11
				12
				13
				14
				15
				16
				17
				18
				19
				20
				21
				22
Ox1 (3)	Ox2 (3)	Ox3 (3)		23
				24
P1 bu / fr / ge (3)	P1 bu / fr / ge (3)	t bu (7)		25
				26
				27
				28
				29
	Eve (4)			30
				31
				32

Part-time studies

1st Semester	2nd Semester	3rd Semester	4th Semester	5th Semester	6th Semester	7th Semester	8th Semester	Credits			
Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)	S4 bu (3)	Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)	S1 bu (3)	Atelier bu Atelier fr Atelier ge (13)	S7 bu (3)	T bu (14)	T bu (14)	1			
									2		
									3		
			S5 fr (3)					S2 fr (3)			4
											5
											6
			S6 ge (3)					S3 ge (3)		S8 fr (3)	7
											8
											9
			Ox1 (3)					Ox2 (3)			10
										t bu (7)	11
											12
			Eve (4)								13
P1 bu / fr / ge (3)		P1 bu / fr / ge (3)		Ox3 (3)		14					
						15					
						16					

Theory seminars

- S1** Transformation + Methods
- S2** Context + Nature
- S3** Urban Planning + Public Space
- S4** Office + Context
- S5** Use + Gender
- S6** The City
- S7** Creative Cluster
- S8** Materiality + Spirit
- S9** The Urban Condition

Project studios

- Thesis**
- bu** Burgdorf BFH-AHB
- fr** Fribourg EIA-FR
- ge** Genève EIG
- t** Thesis preparation
- T** Thesis

Optional courses

- Profile Search**
- Ox1–Ox3**
- P1**

Field trip

Course starting dates

Spring calendar week 8
Autumn calendar week 38

Length

Full-time at least 4 semesters
Part-time at most 8 semesters

Fees

Semester fee	CHF 600.– per semester
Enrolment fee	CHF 100.–
Examination fee	CHF 80.–
Fee for social, cultural and sports activities	CHF 24.– per semester
Students' association membership	CHF 15.– per semester
Handouts and readers	CHF 50.– per semester

Admission requirements

- Bachelors degree in architecture or an equivalent architectural training at a university of applied sciences, or a bachelor degree in architecture from the Federal Polytechnic (ETH) or a university, plus one year of professional experience
- Presentation of a dossier, on the basis of which the course administration will decide admission

Advice and information events

A printed guide cannot answer every question. We therefore hold several information events every year at which our courses are presented. We also offer face-to-face meetings where you can be given individual advice on the requirements for study.

These information events and individual meetings are free of charge and do not commit you in any way. Further information, contact details and application forms can be found on our homepage.

www.ahb.bfh.ch

www.jointmaster.ch

Course administration of the Joint Master of Architecture

Head of Joint Master of Architecture, Burgdorf:

Stanislas Zimmermann, stanislas.zimmermann@bfh.ch

**“The reality of a room is not in its walls
but the void encompassing them.”**

(Lao Tse)