



# Architectural Design Studio (ADST) 656

## Diploma Project (Revision 2)

**Status:** Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#) for the current revision ✕

**Delivery mode:** [Paced study](#). Delivered via Brightspace.

**Credits:** 6

**Area of study:** Architecture

**Prerequisites:** [ADST 606](#) or [ADST 675](#)

**Prerequisites:** [ADST 690](#) 

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**Faculty:** [Faculty of Science and Technology](#) 

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**Notes:**

- This course is offered in January, May, and September. You may contact the FST Student Support at 1-855-362-2870 to inquire about other offerings.
- Students are required to attend at least 13 mandatory online design studio sessions. Students have eight months (32 weeks) in total to complete and submit their final projects.
- This course is intended for students enrolled in the Graduate Diploma in Architecture (GD Arch) at the RAIC Centre for Architecture at Athabasca University.

## Overview

Architectural Design Studio 656: Diploma Project is the final project of your educational experience in the architectural design studios, leading to the GD Arch. This project can be either a building design or a research project. The diploma project connects architectural theory and practice through the advanced study of professional and cultural issues that give purpose and meaning to design.

For example, a building design project may resolve an existing problem through a new and innovative project or design solution, while a research project may involve academic research and critical analysis of a theoretical problem, with the goal of developing a solution with application beyond a single project and which is of use to other practitioners in the field. For this course, either kind of project must involve a critical analysis of the problem, which is an essential skill for architects.

## Outline

The diploma project may be one of the following:

- a building design with a thoroughly analyzed complex functional program that you have developed **or**
- a research project that you have initiated

You have a choice which of these two projects to undertake, but the specific topic must be approved by your instructor.

A research project may or may not involve a design component involving a building or space in the traditional sense. It may include research into building science, building technology or building materials, the development of a new building typology, a prototype, a set of guidelines, a set of policies, or another architectural topic. You must find a suitable project that will provide an effective solution to a problem.

If your diploma project will result in a building, the following written documents must be prepared:

- statement of intent
- project proposal
- project program

- final presentation

You are responsible for conceptualizing, framing, and realizing the project under the supervision of your instructor, the director of the RAIC Centre for Architecture, and the external advisor(s) requested by you and approved by the instructor and director.

Throughout this course, you must maintain a sketchbook capturing personal engagement with the studio, thoughts and observations on your work and that of others, design explorations you considered and abandoned, your interactions with critics and fellow students, and questions that remain unanswered. The sketchbook is a required element of all design studio courses.

You are encouraged to engage your instructor often throughout the course. Their experience and knowledge will be a valuable resource as you develop your design thinking, and they will act as a sounding board for your design ideas.

You are required to develop a personal archive on your computer to store materials that are pertinent to your studies. This can include images, texts, scanned drawings, models, and websites. If this is your first course using a personal archive at Athabasca University, please carefully read **Archives and Collections** [↗](#). It will familiarize you with concepts behind a personal archive and with design, organizational tools, and formats that can help you achieve a workable collection. Your personal archive will be central to your studies throughout the program and to your ongoing career.

During the first 13 weeks, you will be asked to share your work in progress with your instructor and the other students in the studio. This weekly session is the equivalent of a desk critique (a session during which the architecture student sits down with their instructor to review their designs) given in a face-to-face studio.

These interactive meetings will be held in an online environment that includes video conferencing, audio conferencing, and social media, and will allow the instructor to provide feedback in the form of sketches beside or as a layer over your work. This is intended to be a productive working session

much like you would experience in an architect's office. You will receive a full set of instructions for connecting to the virtual studio.

## Learning outcomes

Adapted from the Canadian Architectural Certification Board, [Canadian Education Standard](#) .

After successfully completing this course, you should have developed the following:

- *Understanding* of the fundamentals of visual perception and the principles and systems of order that inform two- and three-dimensional design and architectural composition, and urban design.
- *Ability* to use appropriate representational media, including freehand drawing and computer technology, to convey essential information at each stage of the pre-design and design process.
- *Ability* to make technically precise drawings and develop an outline specification for a proposed building.
- *Ability* to apply fundamental architectural principles in the design of buildings, interior spaces, and sites, and to respond to natural and built site characteristics in the development of a program and the design of a project.
- *Ability* to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project, which accounts for client and user needs, appropriate precedents, space and equipment requirements, relevant laws and standards, and site selection and design assessment criteria.
- *Ability* to produce and document a comprehensive architectural project based on a building program and a site, which includes the development of forms and spaces demonstrating an understanding of structural and environmental systems, building envelope systems, building

assemblies, and life safety provisions, and of the principles of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

## Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for ADST 656, you must achieve a final course grade of at least 67 percent. Your work in this course will be evaluated based on two projects, and you must complete both projects. You are required to scan and submit your projects to your instructor. Note that your participation in discussions and your sharing of resources will contribute to your grade. The weighting of the projects is as follows:

Activity	Weight	Complete by
Project 1A: Diploma Project Proposal	15%	Week 7
Presentation: Diploma Project Proposal		Week 7
Project 1B: Preliminary Development	20%	Week 13
Presentation: Preliminary Review		Week 13
Project 1C: Intermediate Development	25%	Week 20
Presentation: Intermediate Review		Week 20

Activity	Weight	Complete by
Project 1D: Final Development	30%	Week 32
Presentation: Final Review		Week 32
Project 2A: Reflecting on What You Have Learned / Studio Collection	10%	Week 32
Project 2B: Submit Two Images to the Gallery		Week 32
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## Materials

Although there is no textbook for this studio, the instructor may assign readings as they deem appropriate during the course.

## Student-provided tools and equipment

You must provide a digital camera for your own use, as well as a few other tools. The items you will need to provide are listed below:

### Photography tools:

- Smartphone with camera, or digital camera (SLR preferable)

**Drawing materials:**

- 35.56 cm × 43.18 cm (14" × 17") Strathmore 300 series acid-free drawing paper
- 22.86 cm × 30.48 cm (9" × 12") Strathmore 300 series sketchbook
- white or beige 2-ply card stock
- trace paper

**Drawing tools:**

- › 0.30 mm precision felt pen (or similar)
- › 2H to 2B pencils or mechanical pencils
- › coloured markers and/or pencil crayons
- › compass
- › protractor
- › ruler
- › drawing board (recommended)

**Modeling materials:**

- white or beige 2-ply card stock
- clear plastic sheet

**Modeling tools:**

- › self-healing cutting mat: 18" × 24" (45.75 cm × 60.96 cm) or larger preferable
- › metal-edge cork-back ruler (various sizes)
- › stainless steel knife
- › masking tape/painter's tape
- › white glue
- › modeling set square

## Use of computers

You may use computers to design and complete your projects for this studio (except where noted), but remember that hand drawing and modeling skills remain essential to the development of an architect. You are encouraged to use those skills wherever possible.

## Important links

- [RAIC Centre for Architecture](#) 
- [Graduate Diploma in Architecture](#) 
- [Courses](#) 
- [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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*Updated June 8, 2026*

View **previous revision** 

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