



BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
**DEPARTMENT OF  
ARCHITECTURE**

**BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE (BUDA)  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

The handbook is revised and updated regularly.

This version is updated for 2025-2026 Academic Year @ September 2025.

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## 1. General Information

Department of Architecture at Bilkent University (BUDA) offers **Master of Science** degree in Architecture to equip students with advanced skills in architectural design and in-depth critical thinking on architectural theories. The graduate program invites students who would like to excel in using current technologies and broaden ways of creative thinking in architecture. This 2-year program has a research-based curriculum, with a thesis as the end product for the degree.

Areas of Specialization:

- \* **History and Theory:** Focuses on the cultural, social, historical, and theoretical dimensions of architecture. Topics include architectural criticism, architecture and society, urbanism, and preservation.
- \* **Architectural Technologies:** Explores the integration and application of current technologies in architectural design, construction and theory. Areas of study include building science, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and computational design.
- \* **Urban Studies:** Investigates issues in urban design and theory, including urban memory, politics, and environmental history.

BUDA operates under the Graduate School of Engineering and Science, accessible at <http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/>.

## 2. Admissions

Applicants are required to have a Bachelor of Architecture degree or a B.S. degree in a related field of design.

Admission requirements include

- *B.S. Graduation CGPA: 2.80/4.00*
- *ALES scores: 55 (quantitative)\* or GRE General Test: 153 (Minimum\*\* quantitative)*

\*ALES (Akademik Personel ve Lisansüstü Eğitimi Giriş Sınavı - Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Examination) is required from resident Turkish citizens who are applying for the graduate program. Turkish citizens who are residents of foreign countries and those applicants who are not Turkish citizens may provide GRE scores instead of ALES.

\*\* Applications from those candidates, who miss these minimum scores by a small margin, but have other academic credentials that indicate a strong background necessary to complete the applied degree, will also be considered.

- *English Proficiency Exam Scores*

All non-native speakers of English are required to submit a proof of satisfactory knowledge of English.

TOEFL IBT (at least 87), IELTS (at least 6.5 average and 5.5 from each section) or Bilkent English Proficiency Exam (at least C).

- *Proof of Degree (if already obtained)*
- *Past academic records / Transcripts*
- *Statement of Purpose: 1 page of well-written essay about the intended research interest(s).*
- *2 Letters of Recommendation*
- *Portfolio (optional)*
- *Prior contact with the anticipated advisor is strongly advised*

Selected applicants who meet the requirements above are invited for an interview.

Source: <http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/>

### **3. Courses and Degree Requirements**

Following the completion of at least 21 credit units of course work in the first year of study, the candidates must prepare and successfully defend a thesis through taking one seminar course in their area of specialization. Expected duration to complete the M.S. program is four semesters; the maximum duration is six semesters.

Students with a B.S. degree not in architecture, but in a related field will need to take 3 additional undergraduate ARCH-coded courses selected from the curriculum of architecture program to acquire necessary background in the field.

The list of graduate courses offered by the department of architecture (ARCH-coded) can be seen in Table 1. Not all of the courses are offered every semester, thus it is the responsibility of the student to check the offerings every semester from the links below:

[https://stars.bilkent.edu.tr/homepage/plain\\_offerings](https://stars.bilkent.edu.tr/homepage/plain_offerings)

Electives: <https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/dep/index.html>

Table 1 – Offered Graduate Courses by BUDA

Course Code	Course Name	Course Credit	
		Bilkent	ECTS
<b>ARCH 513</b>	Theory and Methodology	3	5
<b>ARCH 514</b>	Architectural Readings	3	5
<b>ARCH 515</b>	Topics in Architectural Technology	3	5
<b>ARCH 516</b>	Computational Design Technologies	3	5
<b>ARCH 517 (ARCH417)</b>	Advanced Visualization Studio	3	5
<b>ARCH 533</b>	Analysis of Buildings	3	5
<b>ARCH 534</b>	Structural Analysis	3	5
<b>ARCH 550</b>	Current Issues in Architectural Design	3	5
<b>ARCH 563 (ARCH463)</b>	Modern Turkish Architecture	3	5
<b>ARCH 564</b>	Space and Culture	3	5
<b>ARCH 565</b>	Contemporary Architectural Discourse: Reading as Experimental Fieldwork	3	5
<b>ARCH 566 (ARCH466)</b>	Architectural Theory and Criticism	3	5
<b>ARCH 590</b>	ARCH Graduate Seminar	--	1
<b>ARCH 599</b>	Master's Thesis	--	71

There are must courses and restricted and elective courses in the graduate program. Table 2 shows the list of courses, their credits and when to enroll in these courses during the curriculum.

Table 2- Courses to be enrolled within the BUDA Msc Program

Course Code		Course Name	Course Credit		Specifications / When to enroll
			Bilkent	ECTS	
GE 500		Research Methods and Academic Publication Ethics	--	1	To be enrolled in the 1st and 2nd semester
GE 590		Academic Practices	--	12	To be enrolled EVERY semester
ARCH 590		(ARCH) Graduate Seminar	--	1	To be enrolled in the 3rd semester of the program
ARCH 599		Master's Thesis	--	71	To be enrolled EVERY semester except the 1st semester
ARCH513 (or GE512)	at least 21 credit course work	1 Core Graduate Course	3	5	To be enrolled within the first year of the program
ARCH5XX		2 Restricted Graduate Electives	3 credit (each)	5 credit (each)	Any ARCH5XX coded courses with minimum 3 credits
5XX or 6XX		4 Graduate Electives	3 credit (each)	5 credit (each)	Any 5XX or 6XX coded courses with minimum 3 credits that are offered by Graduate School of Engineering and Science (with the consent of the program coordinator/advisor)
		Total	21		

Suggested workloads for the semesters are as follows:

• **Semester 1**

- GE 500 and GE590
- 1 Core Graduate + 2 or 3 restricted/graduate elective courses
- Research topic and research questions are expected

• **Semester 2**

- GE 500 and GE590
- ARCH599
- 3 or 4 restricted/graduate elective courses
- Talking/discussing the research topic with the advisor and starting the relevant literature review.

• **Summer**

- Work on the research plan, research questions, hypothesis and literature review.
- Prepare for the seminar presentation (ARCH 590) for Fall semester

• **Semester 3**

- GE590
- ARCH599
- ARCH590 – Graduate Seminar
- Any electives/restricted electives that is still needed
- Work on data collection, analysis, progress in research

• **Semester 4**

- GE590
- ARCH599
- Thesis writing

The work load per each semester may vary depending on the research project.

### **3.1. Academic Advising and Course Registration**

Graduate students should register each semester at the specific dates announced in the Bilkent University Academic Calendar. The Academic Calendar may be found on the university's website. Before each registration period, students should meet/consult with their advisors to discuss the courses to enroll.

It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they select courses from the correct category (e.g., restricted elective, elective) to fulfill curriculum requirements. The final course program needs approval from student's advisor before the designated add/drop period. After submitting their course schedule on the AIRS system, students should monitor that their courses are approved and should contact their advisors if the program is not approved.

### **3.2. Course Descriptions**

#### **GE 500: Research Methods and Academic Publication Ethics**

Preparation of graduate students for their careers. Regular discussion of term project, thesis, or dissertation with academic advisor. Attendance in various research seminars or scholarly talks offered regularly at the departments. Participation in a series of independent modules including workshops, short courses, and seminars in the Fall and Spring semesters on "Academic Integrity", "Effective Teaching", and other topics such as doing literature searches and publishing.

GE 500 is a zero-credit required course that aims to contribute to the preparation of graduate students for their careers. Graduate students register for GE 500 in the first semester of the program in which they are enrolled, and they need to pass the course with an S (Satisfactory) grade within two semesters.

All graduate students are required to participate in a set of activities in the context of GE 500. The participation in this set of activities contributes towards the completion of the required course GE 500. Each student is expected to keep a file that will be her/his personal portfolio to maintain a record of the activities for personal use.

#### **GE 590: Academic Practices**

This course aims to contribute to the preparation of graduate students for academic studies and research. It includes practical classroom teaching, practical lab assistance and teaching, and provides practice in conducting exams and grading assignments.

The students must register to the course from their first semester until their graduation.

### **ARCH 590 Graduate Seminar**

Academic presentations by graduate students on the theses they are preparing, answering relevant questions on the thesis and the revisions.

### **ARCH 599 Master's Thesis**

Preparations towards the presentation of the thesis to the thesis jury, necessary format adjustments according to the Institute requirements.

### **ARCH 513 Theory and Methodology**

Deciphering and understanding approaches for analyzing the built environment. Evaluation and interpretation of texts related to architectural histories and theories.

### **ARCH 514 Architectural Readings**

Critical analyses of architectural texts; methods for analyzing architectural buildings; ways of deciphering digital and traditional (re)presentations of architecture.

### **ARCH 515 Topics in Architectural Technology**

This course introduces students to research topics on environmental sciences including light and sound, heat and air quality in built environment for meeting various comfort criteria; while materials science and construction systems are indistinguishable inputs of the architectural design that should work in coherence with the environmental factors.

### **ARCH 516 Computational Design Technologies**

Digital tools, media, digital geometries and parametric approaches that can be utilized in the process of producing architectural solutions.

### **ARCH 517 Advanced Visualization Studio**

Advanced techniques in computer aided visualization. Virtual environments, internet based platforms and software packages for design related disciplines utilized for creating design visualizations.

### **ARCH 550 Current Issues in Architectural Design**

A look at the contemporary buildings both from our geography and from abroad. Studies on the current architectural discussions.

### **ARCH 563 Modern Turkish Architecture**

Study of architectural developments in Turkey from 1900 to the present within a socio-cultural framework; particular emphasis on the interrelationship of architecture and political developments; survey of important buildings, key figures of architecture and urban design; extensive readings on the subject.



### **ARCH 564 Space and Culture**

Investigations on the relationship between culture and the built environment, including the work of architects, designers, and planners as well as the ordinary people who create our surroundings. Focus on the theoretical basis for architecture and cultural studies.

### **ARCH 565 Contemporary Architectural Discourse: Reading as Experimental Fieldwork**

Review of the developments in Western architectural culture from the turn of the twentieth century to the present; contemporary architectural movements and theories.

### **ARCH 566 Architectural Theory and Criticism**

Investigation of architectural history, theory and criticism on special topics; social, cultural and political influences on architecture; readings of important theoretical and critical writings about a broad range of topics.

Source: <https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/course>

### **3.3. Taking Courses from Other Universities**

In addition to courses offered at Bilkent, students may take courses (maximum of 2) from other universities that have instruction in English. Taking such courses is subject to approval by the course's instructor, student's advisor, and the Graduate School of Engineering and Science. The grades students receive from these courses will not count toward their CGPA, but will count toward the students' curriculum requirements.

To apply for taking courses from other universities, students need to submit a petition to the Graduate School of Engineering and Science before the course registration deadline. After finishing the course, as soon as letter grades are announced, students have to submit another petition to the Graduate School of Engineering and Sciences (with the transcript from the other university attached).

### **4. Graduate Program Faculty (Advisors/ Co-advisors)**

Each student in the program is assigned an academic advisor, who guides the student's academic progress and the thesis. The advisor needs to be one of the faculty members of the graduate program of BUDA. More detailed information can be found on the web site of the department ([https://arch.bilkent.edu.tr/?page\\_id=4849](https://arch.bilkent.edu.tr/?page_id=4849)).

If needed, students may also have co-advisors from or outside of Bilkent University, who can support them in the specific thesis research. The co-advisors should have a Ph.D. degree. Co-advisors need to be reported to and approved by the Graduate School. For

the co-advisor appointment, the student has to contact the department office and initiate the process.

## 5. Graduate Programs Academic Rules and Regulations

Bilkent University's official grading system makes use of the below grades:

A+	4.00	B	3.00	C-	1.70	FX	0.00
A	4.00	B-	2.70	D+	1.30	FZ	0.00
A-	3.70	C+	2.30	D	1.00		
B+	3.30	C	2.00	F	0.00		

See <https://www.bilkent.edu/www/lisansustu-egitim-ogretim-yonetmeligi/> for details.

In addition to the general rules as defined in the graduate regulations that can be found in the above link, for BUDA graduate program also the following regulations apply:

- Students need to successfully complete the courses in 3 semesters. In necessary cases as approved by the chair and the advisor, one additional semester may be allocated for the completion of the courses. Failure to successfully complete the required number of courses in 4 semesters leads to the termination of the student status.
- In the case of requirement of undergraduate courses to be taken, students are not granted an extra scientific preparation semester and are expected to comply with the above time confinements.
- Students in BUDA graduate program are expected to follow rules and values of academic ethics. For further information please refer to: [http://ascu.bilkent.edu.tr/Academic\\_Honesty.pdf](http://ascu.bilkent.edu.tr/Academic_Honesty.pdf).

## 6. Tuition, Financial Support, Graduate Scholarship Assistants and Responsibilities

### 6.1. Tuition

Students who receive tuition waiver must hold satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving it. The tuition waiver may be discontinued or may not be 100% waived if students:

- 1) do not successfully complete course requirements in 4 semesters,
- 2) have their CGPA < 3.00 at the end of the 4th semester,
- 3) students are professionally employed outside the University.

## **6.2. Financial Support**

Students in BUDA graduate program are evaluated and selected based on the interview performance and CGPA in order to be offered a Graduate Assistant (GA) position. GAs receive financial support depending on the department's budget and the maximum limit as determined by the Bilkent University. They must hold satisfactory academic progress and perform assistantship duties successfully to continue maintaining their GA positions.

In addition to the University's financial support, students may make use of other funding opportunities. If a student's financial support is transferred to a grant, the student is responsible for notifying the department. In the case of delayed notice and/or double payments students will be asked to refund the extra payment.

## **6.3. Graduate Assistant/ship (GA)**

GA assignments are done by the department and GAs report directly to BUDA chair. GA position requires assisting the courses, BUDA faculty and helping with the departmental tasks. GAs need to be available during work days and working hours. They need to support the department with valid contact information which can be used to reach them. In the case traveling outside of Ankara, GAs need to have the Graduate Student Time Off Request Form filled, approved and submit it to the department 1 week prior to their departure. If no such form is submitted, GAs are expected to be in Ankara and ready to come to the campus and undertake all duties given by the department. Any health issues that prevent the GAs to perform their duties need to be reported to the department office and to the instructor/coordinator of the course they are assigned to where applies.

During the summer break, GAs may leave Ankara, provided that they use the Graduate Student Time Off Request Form. However, serving to the department during summer is required for the financial support to be continued.

Should the GA decide to give up their status as an assistant, the department should be notified asap.

GA status is renewed monthly and any unsuccessful GA's assistantship status may be terminated at the end of the month, without waiting for the end of the semester. The GA status may be terminated if:

- Student fails to complete the required workload of courses successfully in 4 semesters
- Student's CGPA < 3.00 at the end of the 4th semester
- Student is employed outside of campus
- Student's advisor deems it necessary that the student allocates more time on the thesis research.

## **6.4. Conference funding**

Students are advised to contact their advisors for any funds for conference.

## **6.5. Housing and Private Health Insurance**

Housing and private health insurance are not automatically granted by BUDA. However, if applied, graduate students may be eligible for dormitory/housing provided by Bilkent University. Further information regarding accommodation on campus can be found at <http://yurtlar.bilkent.edu.tr/en/>. Forms to apply for accommodation on campus need to be requested from the Department on the registration day. Filled forms are then submitted to the related unit (responsible for dorms or housing).

Private health insurance is provided only to GAs upon application during the registration period.

## **7. Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines for the Graduate School of Engineering and Science**

The thesis guidelines are determined by the Graduate School. All guidelines are subject to change, and it is the responsibility of the student to comply with these guidelines [http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/?page\\_id=55](http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/?page_id=55).

The thesis submission format and guidelines have strict requirements, which can be found at <http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/thesis-dissertation-submission-guidelines.pdf>

For writing style and form, the submitted theses can be accessed online at <http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/community-list>. Please follow the headings 'University Library' - 'Bilkent Theses' - 'Graduate Program in Architecture'.

### **7.1. Graduation Requirements**

- Minimum 3.00 CGPA
- All courses in curriculum are passed (M.Sc.: within the student's first 4 semesters)
- Has to pass thesis/dissertation defense, submit appropriate documentation and copies of thesis/dissertation to institute
- No loans to the university

### **7.2. Master Thesis Guidelines**

Students need to begin their thesis no later than their third semester and need to finish no later than the end of the 6th semester.

Defense committee must consist of a minimum of 3 committee members (maximum: 5), and at least one of them need to be outside of the Bilkent University. In the case of having a co-advisor, the co-advisor may attend the thesis defense but does not have the right to vote.

The M.S Thesis Examination Application Form (which can be accessed from [http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/?page\\_id=55#](http://mfbe.bilkent.edu.tr/?page_id=55#) ) with the names of the jury members, date and

place of the defense should be approved by the program director and must be submitted to the Graduate Engineering and Science at least **10 days prior to the thesis defense**.

It is also the student's responsibility to send the thesis to the committee members at least 10 days before the scheduled defense date. Please note that different committee members may have different time requirements to evaluate the theses. So, students are strongly encouraged to contact their committee members and ask about their preferences.

Before the thesis defense, advisors should submit the theses to Turnitin. This process is handled by sending an email to [plagiarism@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:plagiarism@bilkent.edu.tr). One copy of the Turnitin report is automatically sent to the Graduate School. If necessary, the student may revise the thesis. Under such circumstances, the advisor should upload the revised document to Turnitin again. The final plagiarism report should be sent to all jury members by the advisor.

The student prepares appropriate documentation and brings them to the defense (See Graduate School website for the necessary forms). The student needs to print out 2 copies of each form (one for BUDA program records, one for the institute) and bring them to the thesis defense.

After the thesis defense, the jury makes one of three decisions: Successful, Fail, or Correction. The Graduate School has to be informed of the decision within 3 days of the defense. In the case of a successful defense, the student has to submit the hard covered and signed copies to the Graduate School within 1 month latest. This time frame may be narrower depending upon the initiation of the next semester. The time needed to reach the jury members and have the copies signed is included in the time frame. In the case of correction, the student may be granted 3 months, after which the jury may decide to review the thesis again.