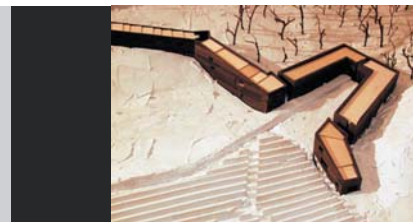


Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano University)

Accademia di architettura

MENDRISIO



DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Master programme: Master of Art in Architecture
2-year programme 5-years course + 1-year professional practice

CONTACT INFO

Visiting address: Accademia di architettura
Villa Argentina
Largo Bernasconi 2
CH – 6850 Mendrisio
Switzerland

Admissions contact: International Office
Tel. 00 41 58 666 5000
Email: segretariato@arch.unisi.ch
Website: www.arch.unisi.ch

Dean of school: Prof. Arch. Josep Acebillo

GENERAL INFO

Application deadline: Please contact school for more information.

Tuition and fees: Please contact school for more information.

Accommodation: Accommodation can be provided.

Setting: The Accademia di architettura campus is situated in Mendrisio, a little town in Ticino canton, on the southern slopes of the Alps. Mendrisio is close to Milan, immersed in Italian culture but still very Swiss. Ticino is one of the richest European districts in the history of architecture. Many important architects were born in Ticino, from medieval Maestri Comacini to Carlo Maderno, from Francesco Borromini to contemporary architects such as Mario Botta and Aurelio Galfetti (founders of the Accademia), Luigi Snozzi and Livio Vacchini.

Student population: 550 students, 40% female, 10% foreign-exchange students.

Faculty: 70 full-time or part-time scientific staff. In addition, 100 assistants and other visiting lecturers.

Student service/activities: ASMA – Student association, organizing workshops, meetings, publications.

Facilities: Library with over 30.000 titles and 225 magazines; model workshop, photography workshop, student residence, fully-equipped CAD computers for students.

Admission requirements: Swiss federal high school certificate; Swiss canton high school certificate; GCE A-levels, high school diploma or other foreign school certificate (deemed equivalent). Candidates aged over 25 who are not in possession of the qualifications indicated, but are believed by the Accademia to have a particular background or experience testifying to their aptitude to the study of architecture, are also admitted.

Language: The official teaching language is Italian, although certain courses and design studios may be held in English (exceptionally German or French). Thanks to the international environment, the foreign-language students at the Accademia have never found language a social or academic obstacle. The Accademia organizes each year a two week Italian language course for all new non-italian speaking students.

Profile of the school

In Switzerland, a degree course in architecture follows the regulations laid down by the European Union, which stipulate about 4600 hours of theoretic and practical teaching for a total duration of 10 semesters. The programme includes a propaedeutic cycle for the first two years and a more specific second cycle for the third, fourth and fifth years, with one half of the latter occupied by final degree work. At the Accademia only the 5-year course is applied, whilst the 3+2 curriculum allowing a BA to be taken after the third year is not. However, the first three years are devised in such a way as to provide the maximum of mobility.

Structure of the curriculum

The teaching is subdivided into 50% of design ateliers and 50% of theoretic courses. The theoretic courses refer to seven different subjects: Theory of art and architecture, Philosophy, Culture of territory, Mathematics, Structures, Ecology, Technology.

The first year is treated as an introduction to architecture, with theoretical lessons in the various areas of the discipline, flanked by practical exercises in the ateliers.

The first-year courses are all mandatory, whilst the second year allows an initial freedom of choice by the student. The third, fourth and fifth year courses are appreciably less obligatory, thus enabling the student to arrange a personalized curriculum more freely.

In what are called transverse courses, the student deals with subjects which, given their specific nature or novelty, do not fall within the central corpus of frontal lessons. The horizontal ateliers (i.e. attended by all the students enrolled in the year or semester concerned) deal with design and theory and are in turn subdivided by year into themes.

Between the end of the first year and the beginning of the fourth, an obligatory period of professional practice is prescribed. This one-year course involves time spent by the student outside the Accademia, in contact with industry and the working world.

The degree is organised by a lecturer who supervises the various stages of work. Each degree atelier is attended by a maximum of eight students, under a lecturer and an assistant architect. In the final phase of the degree course, a qualified jury expresses its judgement on work produced.



Educational programme

The Master of Advanced Studies

With the year 2004/2005 a teaching post-graduate cycle was also launched, with a Master of Advanced Studies in architecture and planning. This course offers further critical and professional education, guaranteed by a group of authoritative architects and scholars. The course studies architectural design and organisation on the scale of landscape, identifying new ways in which the architect's competence can affect the processes of territorial transformation today. To the professional master on territorial design, as from the next academic years will be added other specialised postgraduate courses: on the subjects of restoration and reuse and of Production Design, i.e. architecture for cinema, theatre and television.

From school to cultural hub of excellence in architecture

The Accademia di architettura of Mendrisio was founded ten years ago. But although so young, it has attracted international attention as one of the most interesting contemporary workshops of architectural culture and its teaching. The Accademia's success is confirmed foremost by its students, who have continued since the beginning to enrol at a rate of around one hundred for each year of the course. We consider this to be an academically ideal number for the purposes of our school. The Accademia's popularity with students stems from a combination of reasons: the novelties offered in its curriculum; the presence among its teaching staff of architects of international renown; and the close connection established at Mendrisio between university life and involvement in cultural affairs.

Among the most important novelties introduced at Mendrisio was the decision to focus on the architect as a new figure, who combines technological and practical preparation with solid critical knowledge. In our curriculum the ateliers account for 50% of the credits and teaching load, and converging on these are cultural contributions made to heighten the young architect's theoretical awareness. In the ateliers, students are closely supervised and assisted by lecturers and assistants who provide a genuine apprenticeship. As a result, critical, technical and scientific knowledge is continually verified "in the field" by means of practical experiments. Students thus develop a humanistic as well as pragmatic outlook towards design, avoiding the dangers of a superficial or

simplistically artistic interpretation of architecture. Furthermore, thanks to the ample technological equipment at the disposal of students, their research and applied work on specific cases makes our ateliers very similar to real architectural practices. In these ateliers, in fact, projects can be prepared and developed in the varying scales and stages of design, modelling and representation.

But the Accademia is not simply a school of architecture. Its campus has developed to the point of constituting a new hub of cultural excellence in the district extending from the Swiss Ticino canton to the metropolitan area of Milan in Italy. The Accademia's numerous cultural initiatives include major exhibitions; lectures by world-famous architects and scholars; the creation of the Archivio del Moderno, which operates as a centre for the study of modernism in architecture; the constant enrichment of the library system through the acquisition of specialized archives in the fields of art and architectural history; the publication of catalogues and essays; the establishment of the iCUP (Institute for Contemporary Urban Project); the opening in 2005 of a new exhibition gallery annexed to the school and in 2006 of a students residence; and the project for a future Museum of architecture. This rich panorama of activities, which also led to the birth of an association of Friends of the Accademia di architettura, makes Mendrisio a university Campus where students are directly involved in the creation of contemporary architectural culture.