

Lorna Edwards

Architect

‘Being an architect is fascinating and requires imagination, creativity, technical knowledge, an ability to communicate well and a wide range of practical skills.’

GCE A Levels, Degree, 2 year Diploma/RIBA

Providing information and advice



Who I am: I am an architect working for Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSHP), an international architectural practice based in London.

An example of my work: I currently undertake a wide range of projects including cultural, workplace, civic, leisure and residential. My current project is an extension to the British Museum in London to provide a new special exhibitions centre, conservation and science department and logistics hub. This project is fascinating as we regularly interact with the museum staff and have to make sure that the design of the new facilities will accommodate the Museum’s very specific working methods.

How I work: Being an architect is fascinating and requires imagination, creativity, technical knowledge, an ability to communicate well and a wide range of practical skills. The long training period (a minimum of seven years) requires dedication and commitment. It is often varied, and exciting and always engaging. Successful architects need to acquire a broad range of skills which are best learnt on the job, and you can’t be afraid of hard work. The rewards can be considerable and there are many thrilling directions which being an architect can take you in, from setting up your own practice to working internationally as part of a large company.

Getting there: My own career journey started with work experience after GCSEs. Work experience helped me to realise that what I really wanted to do, was something artistic and varied on a day-to-day basis. Soon after, I started thinking seriously about architecture as a career option. A second round of work experience in a local architect’s office confirmed for me that it was indeed, a wide-ranging and imaginative profession and one which I was now keen to follow. I studied art, humanities and languages at A Level. Many people believe that physics and maths A Levels are necessary to apply for an architecture degree,

however, I found that an arts focus was key as I had to show a portfolio of work at my interview. Eventually I accepted a place at Nottingham University. The three-year BA degree (Part 1) was a stimulating course and quickly showed me how broad the study of ‘architecture’ covers history, art, engineering and the cultural context of built environments.

A position at a large international practice took me to London for my first work placement. This is part of the overall architecture training and a minimum of a year is required before returning to university to do Part 2 of the architecture course. For part of the training (two-year Diploma/ RIBA Part 2) I opted to stay in London to try a more design led and dynamic school (University of Westminster). The diploma was much more design and theory based and we were encouraged to spend time working up presentation drawings. After the diploma, the rest of my architecture training is completed whilst working – Part 3.

My first job after the diploma was at a medium size practice where, because of my French language skills, I was assigned to a small team working on a project in Geneva. Following two years at the practice, I completed my training by passing the Part 3 professional practice exams. In total, qualifying as an architect had taken me eight years.

What pathways could learners follow in order to enter this career? Learners could draw a progression pathway and consider their options.

Build your own practical portfolio of work that demonstrates what you can do. Write a personal profile to describe yourself to an employer.

Linked Activity:
Sculpture A10