

# Aarhus School of Architecture

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The Aarhus School of Architecture, an educational institution under The Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education, has approximately 750 students and employs a staff of about 175. The School offers an international Master in architecture as a supplement to Bachelor and Master's degree programmes taught in Danish. See [www.aarch.dk](http://www.aarch.dk).

The Aarhus School of Architecture introduced a research education programme in 1988. Since then over 60 PhD students and four licentiates have finished their degree in the School. The very first dissertation was based on a theoretical as well as an empirical reflection on the design processes carried out as part of a design project carried out during the PhD in collaboration with an industry partner. As such, the Aarhus School of Architecture can claim to have been involved in “research-by-design” from the very first steps of its research education.

The PhD has subsequently entered through several stages that reflect the development of design-driven research and changing institutional strategies and priorities at the Aarhus School of Architecture. The current phase took its starting place in a reorganisation of the School in 2012. The reorganisation intended to increase the focus on collaborative projects, innovation and practice-related skills under the heading ‘Engaging through Architecture’. The change had significant implications for research education as well. It implied a stronger emphasis on the relationship between research and practice, focusing –once more– on how to value design thinking and design methodology as research. The previous consolidation of the research education was as discussed at least partly based on a strengthening of research methodologies and theories found in the humanities and to some degree, the social sciences as well. This development had, by and large, been successful. Still, one consequence was that the research education was not up to date with the recent rapid international developments in the field of design-based research.

The reorganisation allowed for the School to create a new professorial chair in research by design that would also lead the PhD programme. Johan Verbeke took up the position in 2013 as former dean and professor of Sint Lucas (which has since become part of KU Leuven) in Belgium. Verbeke strengthened the international networks considerably. This international focus led to the PhD School participation in the ADAPT-r (Architecture, Design and Art Practice Training-research) focused on practice-driven and design-led research. The project ran from 2013 to 2017 funded by the 7th Framework of Research of the European Commission. Subsequently, the PhD School engaged actively in the CA2RE Network as well in other transdisciplinary collaborations around design-based and artistic research in the context of ELIA (European League of Institutes of Art).

The strong international focus has continued to this date where the PhD School is headed by Professor of Research by Design Claus Peder Pedersen. The PhD School is organised jointly with the Kolding School of Design with the responsibility of the research training of 20-30 PhD fellows. The core activities consist of two core elements arranged in a T-shaped competence profile that covers general research competencies, and an in-depth focus on design-driven –and to some extent artistic– research. The core activities are supplemented by topical and sub-disciplinary courses and seminars organised by the three research labs

at respectively Aarhus School of architecture (1—Territories, Architecture and Transformation, 2—Technology, Building Cultures and Habitation and 3—Emerging Sustainable Architecture) and Kolding Design School (LAB for Sustainability and Design, LAB for Social Design and LAB for Play and Design). The PhD School keep a strong focus on design-driven research combined with an inclusive approach to the wide range of research methodologies that are relevant to the field of architecture and design. The design-driven PhDs include projects where design activities are the main driver for exploring delimited research questions, for instance within the field of digital design and manufacturing supported by the well-equipped workshops at the Aarhus School of architecture. It also includes industrial PhD where the research is carried out through real-world projects in collaboration with industrial partners contributing to research-driven innovation. Finally, the School hosts a small cohort of practice-led PhD fellows, where the systematic investigation of well-established and peer-recognised professional practices aims to provide insights into architectural design processes and contributions.