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V
Università Iuav
di Venezia

Neuroscience **A**ppplied to **A**rchitectural **D**esign



2025/2026

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What is NAAD Master

Expectations move us each day, floating in our conscious minds but also reaching the deeper levels of our being. Neuroscience, environmental psychology, biology, philosophy, anthropology, and science can now help architects rebuild a richer attunement between us and the place we live. At NAAD in Venice, we have convened some of the most well-known professors, professionals, operators, managers, young researchers, and architects in these fields to bridge the gap between scientific theories and design.

NAAD is the first International Postgraduate Course working on the relationship between Neuroscience and Architecture.

NAAD is officially supported by **ANfA, Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture**, the most important hub in the world, founded in 2003 in San Diego, engaged in research and collaboration between architects and neuroscientists in order to explore, through rigorous methods, the relationship between human activities and architecture.



Duration / Teaching

The program is divided into three modules:

Module 1 | From 31 Oct 2025 to 16 Jan 2026

Module 2 | From 09 Feb to 17 Apr 2026

Module 3 | From 11 May to 17 July 2026

Lessons: One week per month, with nine weekly classes over nine months, consisting of **six weeks in-person and three weeks online**.

Degree thesis: The thesis will be presented at the end of October 2026.

Admission requirements

Admission procedures, the required qualifications and any additional requirements, including access to individual training activities: master's or bachelor degree in **architecture and engineering, psychology, philosophy, medicine, or neuroscience, good knowledge of the English language**, a CV and a description of the motivations are required.

Registration fees

The cost of enrollment is 13.000,00 €

Application

Applications will open in May 2025.

Goals

Addressed to architects, designers and consultants of companies the Master aims to train people capable of completing projects and services centred on improving the human experience of architectural and urban space, to be included within design firms, real estate development groups and private and public services management companies.

01 | According to the perception models developed by neurosciences, NAAD embraces scientific knowledge **to favor an architectural design that can create attunement between users' pre-cognitive expectations and the multi-sensorial experience of space.**

Urban spaces and transitions inside/outside buildings are crucial topics our course looks at carefully, intending to integrate scales of perception through an emotionally driven approach with significant outcomes on health.

02 | The Postgraduate Master creates the basis for students to understand how to shape the rooms through the composition of architectural elements (topological and proxemic relationships, geometry, light, rhythm, texture, color, materials, smell, and sound) for a regulated perception of emotions along with spatial experience: this, **to foster humans' cognitive performance and openness in social behavior.**

03 | The course develops its program on urban planning, Workplaces, Residences, Social, Student, and Silver Housing, Airports, Factories, Hospitals, Hotels, Prisons, Malls, and Schools to **provide the tools to create architecture suitable to users and to improve the socio-economic performances (Social Return on Investment and Asset Values) of private and public companies.**

Program

FIRST MODULE / Anatomy of the architectural design

Students will learn how our bodies are equipped with uniquely evolved sensory systems that receive signals from the outside world. Next, we will analyze the connection between architecture and the human sensory system. Light, topology, layout, geometry, rhythm, texture, materials, sounds, and smells: all these elements will be understood individually and through their integration via the physiology of the human sensory systems. Additionally, students will explore the evolution and nature of emotions and memory, culminating in the rise of consciousness. Risk factors can negatively impact user experience in architecture if we do not address these needs; the course will include classes that focus on this issue during seminars centered on existing buildings and designs to measure these topics. In this module, we will also conduct classes in the neuroscience laboratory to study measurement tools and instruments.

SECOND MODULE / Attuning humans' experience with urban and architectural environment

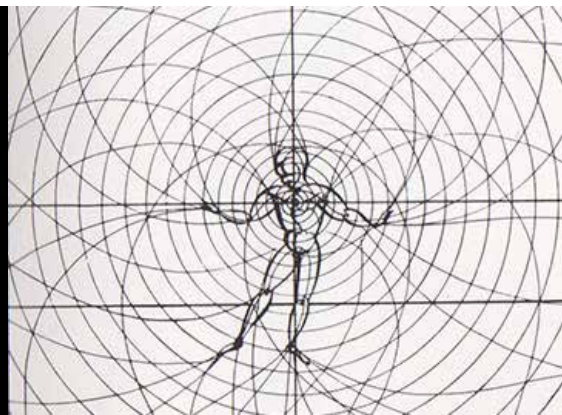
This section will focus on three dimensions: the neurophenomenology of users' experiences, embodied simulation, and predictive models of human interaction within the environment, as well as the methodological approach to briefing and design. Understanding the neuroscientific basis of phenomenology is crucial for comprehending the role of memory, particularly bodily memories, throughout human evolution and the effectiveness of architecture in shaping our cultures. By studying the interplay between stored models of body-space interaction, we will recognize how architecture influences our postural forms during navigation, allowing the brain to modulate embodied simulations and imagination. NAAD will also explore the concept of mild trauma to assess the adverse outcomes of architecture. From this background arises the methodology that enables conscious architects to brief and design protective and healthy urban areas and buildings.

THIRD MODULE / Designing cities for people: social & neurophysiological pre-cognitive human needs and the architects' role.

This module will give students the tools to design buildings and urban areas, considering users' needs. Referring to a selected district within a town, NAAD will organize fourteen days covering the following themes: Urban Design, Workplaces, Housing, Student Housing, Silver Housing, Hospitals and Rest Housing, Civic Centers, Airports, Retail, and Schools. These daily classes will address the expected emotional components and neuropsychological needs in the first part of the daily lessons, focusing on the specific typology for each field of study. Scholars, scientists, and specialists will enrich these mornings by sharing their research experiences. Then, during the second part of each class, in the afternoon, key projects and case studies will be presented by firms, managing companies, or designers who developed them. The first week will focus four days on Urban Design, as NAAD aims to emphasize the crucial role of the public domain in fostering a collaborative social fabric.

FOURTH MODULE / Thesis development: from theory to design

Students must develop a thesis design using a three-step workflow along with the course's running. NAAD will bring all the participants to work on an existing area in Venice that needs to be reshaped. The master plan phase for this district will be a common task for all the students. In this way, all can face the crucial challenge of enriching the design of public rooms and creating proper features for the buildings' assembly. Among the ten themes presented in the third module, inside the plots focused on the master plan, each student must design the thesis theme.



Faculty

The Faculty is made up of more than 90 teachers from different parts of the world.

SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE

Davide Ruzzon

BOARD

Roberta Albiero, Alain Berthoz, Renato Bocchi, Elisabetta Canepa, Vittorio Gallese, Harry Mallgrave, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Perez-Gomez, Sarah Robinson.

FACULTY

www.naad-master.com

Job description and final assessment

Thanks to neuroscience and environmental psychology studies, the mechanisms of interaction between spaces and men have been deepened. In recent years, real estate operators have shown themselves to be increasingly attentive to people's psychological and physical well-being. In the future, more positions will be opened, within public and private companies, for professionals who have gained skills and knowledge that allow them to operate in a multidisciplinary perspective.

This **Master's mission** is to develop knowledge inherent in the relationship between neuroscientific research and human responses within the built environment.

The first graduates have been embarked on research paths within university institutions, have been hired within design companies, or have started their consultancy activities related to the specific educational path.



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