

3.5 M.ARCH to D.ARCH Title Change

As of 2004, the NAAB (National Architecture Accreditation Board) has adopted a new degree entitled D.ARCH (Doctorate of Architecture). The degree requires a minimum of 120 undergraduate semester hours and a minimum of 90 graduate level (professional study/elective) hours. As you may be aware, the 3.5 year M.ARCH track requires well over 90 graduate level credits (107-112 depending on when/where the student entered) in addition to the 120+/-undergraduate credits required prior to entering the program, thus qualifying the title of M.ARCH to be changed to D.ARCH. Most 3.5 year students end up with a minimum of 7.5 years of education and roughly 220 to 250 total credit hours of study. As a comparison, typical PhD programs average between 72 and 90 graduate credit hours and most traditional masters' programs average between 30 and 45 graduate credit hours. The 3.5 M.ARCH degree has been severely deflated in status due to a matter of semantics.

Although the M.ARCH has traditionally been the terminal degree in architecture, those outside the architectural arena are often unaware of this structure and view it as inferior to other terminal degrees that are usually at the PhD level. This is often evident when M.ARCH graduates attempt to teach courses or conduct research in a cross disciplinary manner in related fields such as graphic design, media studies, interior design, environmental design, environmental science, landscape design or sustainable design. These concentrations are often offered in programs outside architecture, but M.ARCH graduates will be viewed as substandard to candidates that carry a "Doctorate" title. The D.ARCH would be considered a first-professional degree on par with the MD or JD and is meant to give architects a richer degree and title that demonstrates the extremely high level of achievement not indicated by the Mastership. The PhD would still be a second professional degree beyond the D.ARCH reserved for more research specific interests. It should also be noted that M.ARCH salaries are also subsequently under-compensated and are lumped in an income range that is too low to pay back the 7.5 year investment.

According to the NAAB, it is up to the individual institutions to decide on the title changes. I would strongly encourage all former 3.5 year students and universities offering 3.5 year programs to support the title promotion from M.ARCH to D.ARCH both for current 3.5 tract students and retroactively for former 3.5 year graduates. As a precedent, it should be noted that Law programs upgraded their degree nomenclature from the LL.B/LL.M system to the Juris Doctor system in the first half of the 20th century. The doctoral distinction is a necessary component for 3.5 year students to be adequately compensated financially and to obtain the proper stature in their desired career path. Those interested should see the online petition at <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/mtodarch/petition.html>. Thank you.