Architectural Association
Head of Finance Recruitment
2026

The Architectural Association

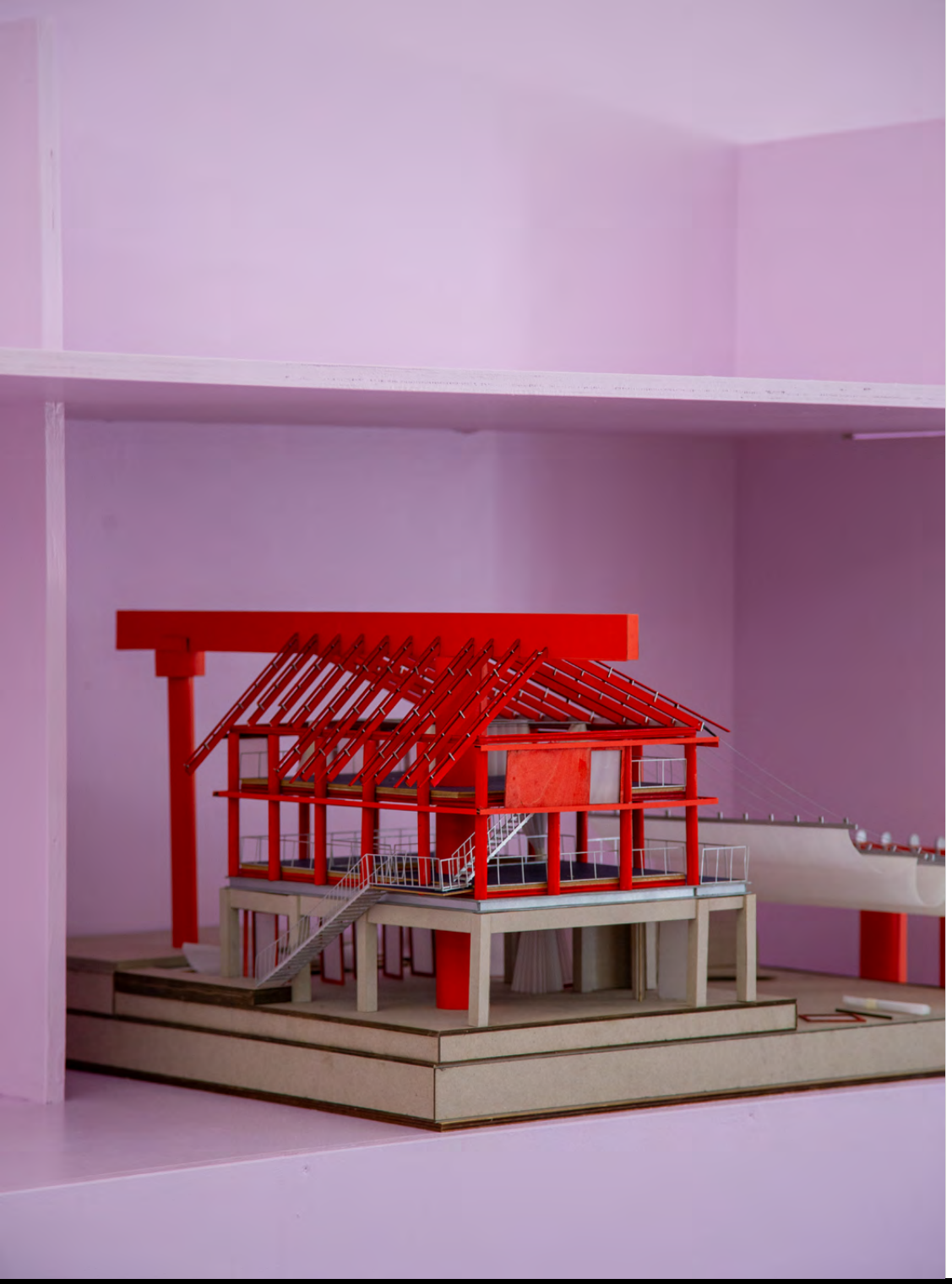
The Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture is a school like no other. It provides its students with a dizzying breadth of choice and opportunity. This variety and difference lend the AA its energy and extraordinary resilience. We are a community that extends beyond the confines of the school to form a network of intrepid students and graduates who understand that the world, like the AA, is full of difficult decisions and unexpected challenges.

The AA is an independent architectural school and an international cultural institution that serves as a forum for ideas. Its principal activity is the operation of a school of architecture, promoting the most experimental, radical and forward-thinking standpoint in the field. Additionally, it is a learned society (the 'Association') comprising members and alumni. Being a major centre for debate, the AA also offers an unparalleled public programme of lectures, symposia and exhibitions, together with accompanying publications.

The Architectural Association was founded in 1847, opening as a day school in 1901. As a registered charity, the AA is committed to public benefit attained by the learning, teaching, discussion and promotion of architecture. The school is recognised as a worldwide leader in architectural education, with graduates that include many of the world's leading architects, scholars, critics and educators.

In 2019, the AA obtained the power to award its own degrees, and the AA Diploma is now recognised internationally as a MArch. The school also offers BA (Hons), GradCert, PG Dip, PG MArch, MSc, MA, MFA and Taught MPhil degrees, as well as a Foundation Award in Architecture, Art and Design and an ARB/RIBA-accredited Professional Practice Part 3 award. In 2025, the School launched a new MA/PG Dip programme in Conservation and Reuse. PhD degrees at the AA are currently validated by the Open University.

The AA premises are located in historic 18th-century Bedford Square in London with an additional 350-acre woodland site at Hooke Park in Dorset. The Bedford Square site is the home to numerous free-to-access lectures, exhibition openings and book launches. The AA has an annual revenue of roughly £25 million, a student body of more than 800 students, 250 academic staff, 120 administrative staff, more than 9,000 members and thousands of visitors that come to engage with the most relevant debates in architecture today.



Head of Finance
Overview

The AA is seeking an experienced Head of Finance with the leadership and operational capabilities to provide excellent financial guidance and stewardship as the organisation develops into the future.

The next Head of Finance will be expected to develop the day-to-day effectiveness of the finance function and advocate for the financial strategy in the wider school. They will work closely with budget holders, building key relationships and enhancing financial understanding within the AA.

Candidates will demonstrate the capability to support key strategic objectives related to finance, development and delivery of change. They will also be able to respond quickly to the changing economic and political environment in the UK and internationally.

The appointed candidate will report directly to the School Director and will play a key role as a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), taking forward strategic priorities, supporting development goals, delivering capital programme developments, and growing commercial and knowledge exchange activities. There will be a strong emphasis on developing excellence in all these areas and on team leadership. They will be a source of wise counsel, providing valuable strategic advice to the School Director and the SMT.

While experience of working within Higher Education is not a prerequisite, candidates must be interested in playing a key role in the leadership of a global cultural organisation.

Role Description
Main Responsibilities

As a member of the SMT the Head of Finance will work very closely with the other department heads, and most closely of all with the Director of the School. They will lead and co-ordinate all financial services in the AA, developing and executing a sustainable financial model for the organisation that anticipates and responds to the opportunities and challenges inherent in the higher education environment.

The Head of Finance leads the operational and strategic development of the Finance team and is responsible for delivering financial planning and reporting tools (including financial strategy, annual budgeting and financial accounts) to the entire School.

The Head of Finance reports to the relevant committees of the AA Council to support the advancement of the AA's academic mission and objectives, strategic plan and goals of the organisation, and fosters collaboration across the AA School Community. The Head of Finance will also serve as a Director of AA Publications Ltd, the independent publisher attached to the AA, providing regular reports in relation to its work. Where appropriate, they will also report to the AA's external regulators.

The Head of Finance manages a team of seven people and is responsible for ensuring the hiring and management of all Finance personnel is in line with AA policy and guidance and delivers the best performance of the team.

Strategic Finance

1. Lead the development and management of the AA finance function and advise on resource allocation strategies (including longer term financial plans and major strategic investments).
2. Design and deliver a financial strategy for the AA that ensures its long-term security and sustainability.
3. Provide oversight and leadership of the financial planning, reporting and accounting operations within the AA.
4. Provide oversight and leadership of the preparation of annual budgets aligned to strategic plans.
5. Lead the development and implementation of modern financial policies and frameworks to support the operations of the AA.
6. Work closely with the Director and members of the Council to identify and develop funding and investment opportunities for the AA.
7. Act as a Director of AA Publications Ltd (and any other trading subsidiary), act as a representative of the AA in relation to employee pension schemes, and provide support and leadership in the relationship with the AA Foundation.
8. Lead on critical external relationships with banks, insurers, regulators and others on behalf of the AA.
9. Lead on financial risk management and reporting.

Operational Finance

1. Oversee the smooth running of the AA's day-to-day finances, accounting systems and services (including payroll, pensions and other staff benefits). This extends to AA Publications Ltd.
2. Provide financial guidance and support to AA staff to ensure effective cost and budget management across departments.
3. Oversee the proper reporting of charitable income, and the reporting to external agencies and regulatory bodies.
4. Oversee the VAT and tax affairs of the AA.
5. Ensure the AA complies with law and regulations across the higher education and charitable sectors regarding finance and tax matters.
6. Oversee the process of financial reporting to the AA Council and the approval, audit and publishing of the AA's accounts.

Senior Leadership Responsibilities

As a member of the SMT, the Head of Finance will work with other members of the group to:

1. Advise the School Director and other leaders on the financial consequences and opportunities of strategic decisions.
2. Support the delivery of the AA's Strategic Plan, and prepare, monitor, review and report progress on the AA's annual operational planning.
3. Support, empower and foster a strong collaborative culture within the Finance team and SMT.
4. Provide development opportunities and lead on the review and appraisal process for members of the Finance team.
5. Communicate clear and meaningful financial information and strategy to the AA School Community.
6. Support the identification and management of financial risks by contributing to the production, implementation and monitoring of the AA's Risk Register.
7. Lead on proactive reporting to to the AA Council and relevant Committees and make recommendations for decisions as required to support operational and strategic delivery and ensure compliance.
8. Undertake other management-related duties, as identified and arise as part of the normal operational developments as assigned by the School Director.

Personal Profile
Experience and Qualifications

1. Undergraduate degree.
2. CCAB Qualified accountant.
3. A track record of strategic financial leadership experience in a complex environment.
4. Experience of team leadership and development.
5. Expertise in broad financial management (accounting, strategic planning, budgeting, tax, payroll, internal controls and regulatory compliance).
6. Experience of effectively introducing change and improvement to financial systems.
7. An understanding of complex governance and committee-based decision-making.
8. Experience in managing and enhancing an organisation's financial condition, investment decisions and risk management.
9. Knowledge of charity accounting and the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) is desirable.

Skills and Personal Qualities

1. An ability to lead, inspire and engage others.
2. Excellent oral and written communication skills.
3. Exceptional interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
4. A strong and collaborative team player who is committed to supporting and developing those around them.
5. Ability to lead in an inclusive manner with a wide range of internal and external constituencies.
6. Creative thinking and problem-solving skills.
7. A dynamic and engaging approach to work.
8. An interest in higher education and architecture is desirable.
9. Experience of estates and project management is desirable.

How To Apply

The AA has retained an executive search partner, Minerva, to advise on the appointment.

Interested candidates should send a full curriculum vitae and a covering letter outlining how you meet the job description and the person specification to aafinance@minervasearch.com. To find out more, please visit:
www.minervasearch.com/current-opportunities/aafinance/

The AA is an Equal Opportunity Employer that values diversity.

To learn more about the AA, visit us at 36 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3ES or aaschool.ac.uk

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