

MAH AAC CET Design & Composition

Sample Paper – 9 | 2026

Duration: 90 Minutes | Maximum Marks: 50

Instructions

- This paper contains **1 practical question** modelled on the MAH AAC CET Design & Composition pattern.
- Total marks: **50**. There is **no negative marking**.
- Render the design in **POSTER COLOUR** or **WATERCOLOUR** on a drawing sheet of approximately **14" × 19"** (portrait orientation recommended).
- Use a pencil for the initial layout; **pencil lines must not be visible** in the final submission.
- All lettering on the cover must be done **freehand**. Stencils and printed lettering are **strictly not permitted**.
- Write your **seat number and name** clearly on the front of the sheet before beginning work.
- **Mobile phones, calculators, and all electronic gadgets** are strictly prohibited in the examination hall.

Design & Composition Question



Question (50 Marks):

Design the front cover of a fictional architecture and culture magazine titled “VASTU: Architecture & Living” (Volume 12, Issue 3, 2026). The cover must be designed on a 14” × 19” sheet in **portrait orientation** and should include all of the following elements:

- (i) The **MASTHEAD** — the magazine name “VASTU: Architecture & Living” at the top of the cover in a bold, distinctive typographic style. The word “VASTU” must be the single most dominant typographic element; the subtitle “Architecture & Living” should appear in a smaller, complementary weight directly below or alongside it.
- (ii) A **CENTRAL COVER IMAGE** — a hand-rendered illustration that represents the magazine’s theme. Choose one of the following subjects: a detailed façade elevation of an Indian heritage building (e.g. a haveli jharokha window, a temple gopuram section, or a colonial arched arcade); a contemporary architectural interior (a café with geometric ceiling vaults, a minimalist reading room with a skylight, or a courtyard with a water body); or a conceptual drawing (a city skyline with green rooftops viewed from a bird’s-eye perspective). The illustration must occupy the largest single zone of the cover and must be rendered with sufficient architectural character — geometric precision, shadow treatment, and structural logic.
- (iii) **FEATURE ARTICLE TEASERS** — two or three short headline lines placed to the side of or below the central illustration (e.g. “Heritage Havelis of Shekhawati — Restoring Rajasthan’s Painted Mansions”, “Passive Cooling Strategies for Indian Climates”, or a similar topic relevant to architecture or living), each in a clearly legible secondary typographic style.
- (iv) **ISSUE DETAILS** — volume number, issue number, and year (Vol. 12 | Issue 3 | 2026) placed discreetly at the top or bottom of the cover in a small, clean typeface.

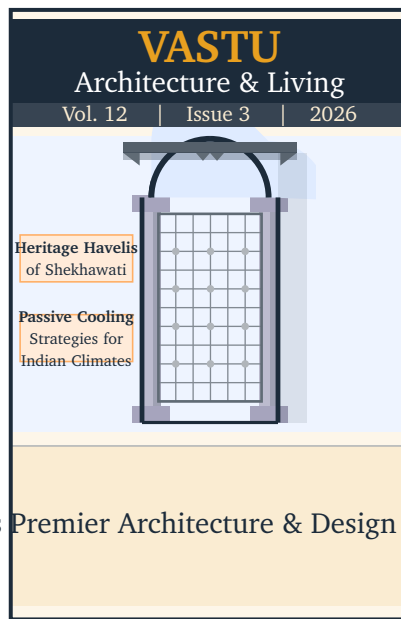
Maintain a clear **VISUAL HIERARCHY**: masthead → central illustration → article teasers → issue details, so each element is instantly legible and occupies a visually distinct zone. Choose a colour palette appropriate to an architecture magazine — consider a monochromatic base (warm white, stone, or charcoal) with one or two strong accent colours (terracotta, cobalt, golden amber, or heritage green) to convey sophistication and editorial quality. Avoid overly busy backgrounds that compete with the illustration.

Work on a 14” × 19” portrait sheet. Poster colours or watercolours are both acceptable.

Suggested Composition Layout (Thumbnail)

The thumbnail below suggests one possible arrangement. Candidates are encouraged to develop their own original composition.





Thumbnail: Magazine Cover — VASTU Architecture & Living

Evaluation Rubric (50 Marks)



Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptors	Marks
Masthead & Typography	“VASTU” is immediately dominant and legible; subtitle and article teasers are well-sized, well-spaced, and typographically complementary; issue details are discreetly placed	12
Central Illustration	Illustration is architecturally convincing (geometry, proportion, shadow); chosen subject is rendered in sufficient detail to communicate architectural character; illustration fills its zone purposefully	12
Visual Hierarchy & Layout	Clear reading order (masthead → illustration → teasers → details); each element occupies a distinct zone; overall composition reads as a credible, professional magazine cover	10
Colour Palette & Tone	Palette suits the editorial tone of an architecture/culture magazine; accent colours are used sparingly and consistently; background does not overpower the illustration or text	8
Technical Execution	Clean, confident colour application; no visible pencil guidelines; neat edges; lettering is entirely freehand; sheet correctly labelled	8
Total		50

Preparation Guidance

- **Planning the cover hierarchy:** before touching the final sheet, sketch at least two thumbnail layouts. Identify four distinct zones — masthead (top), central illustration (largest), article teasers (secondary), and issue details (smallest). A magazine cover is a carefully zoned design, not a free composition.
- **Choosing the architectural illustration subject:** a jharokha window or haveli façade



suits candidates comfortable with symmetry and decorative geometry; an interior scene suits those who can handle perspective; a conceptual bird's-eye skyline suits those with confidence in plan-view drawing. Choose the subject you can render most convincingly and rehearse it on rough paper first.

- **Balancing text and image on a cover:** the illustration should occupy roughly 50–60% of the total cover area. The masthead must be bold enough to be legible at a reduced scale. Teasers should be smaller but still clearly readable — avoid placing text directly over a busy part of the illustration.
- **Architectural drawing conventions:** use consistent line weights — thicker for outlines, thinner for interior detail and shadow hatching. Apply a single directional light source and render cast shadows on one side of every element (column, arch, chajja) to create convincing three-dimensionality. Geometric precision in the arch and lattice (jaali) distinguishes a strong response.
- **Colour palette for editorial design:** architecture magazines favour restrained palettes. Consider warm white or stone as the ground, charcoal or deep navy for the masthead bar, and one strong accent (terracotta, cobalt, golden amber, or heritage green) used consistently across masthead, borders, and teaser bars. Avoid more than two accent colours.
- **Typography for headings vs. teasers vs. captions:** the masthead word “VASTU” should be hand-lettered in bold block or serif capitals; the subtitle “Architecture & Living” should be lighter and smaller; teaser headlines should be clean, upright, and legible at a small scale; issue details should be the smallest text on the cover, neatly aligned.
- **Time management:** approximately 10 min for thumbnail sketching, 10 min for masthead lettering (pencil and ink), 15 min for architectural illustration pencil work, 35 min for colour application, shadow rendering, and teaser text, and 20 min for finishing touches, borders, issue details, and sheet labelling.

