
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to
Beirut Arab University – Tripoli Branch**

Date of visiting board: 02-03 May 2018

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 19 October 2018

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- 1** **Details of institution hosting course/s** (report part A)
 Beirut Arab University
 Faculty of Architectural Engineering
 Tripoli Campus
 Corniche El-Mina
 Lebanon
- 2** **Dean, Faculty of Architecture - Design & Built Environment**
 Prof. Dr. Ibtihal El-Bastawissi
- Director of the Faculty Branch in Tripoli Campus**
 Dr. Nabil Mohareb
- 3** **Course/s offered for validation**
- Bachelor in Architectural Engineering
 Master in Architecture
- be awarded candidate course status at RIBA Parts 1 & 2.
- 4** **Course leader(s)**
- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Level One Course Leader: | Dr. Mostafa ElHefnawi |
| Level Two Course Leader: | Dr. Mostafa Khalifa
Dr. Ali Sedki |
| Level Three Course Leader: | Dr. Mary Felix |
| Level Four Course Leader: | Prof. Dr. Mohamed Assem
Dr. Khaled EIDaghar |
| Level Five Course Leader: | Dr. Eslam EISamahi |
| Level Six Course Leader: | Dr. Nabil Mohareb |
- 5** **Awarding body**
 Beirut Arab University
- 6** **The visiting board**
- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Sally Stewart | academic/chair |
| Jenny Russell | academic/vice chair |
| Andy Usher | practitioner |
| Daniel Goodricke | academic |
| Oussama Dimachkieh | regional representative |
| Sophie Bailey | RIBA validation manager |
- 7** **Procedures and criteria for the visit**
 The visiting board was carried out under the *RIBA procedures for validation and validation criteria for UK and international courses and examinations in architecture* (published July 2011, and effective from September 2011); this document is available at www.architecture.com.
- 8** **Recommendation of the Visiting Board**
 On the 29 October 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally validated:
- RIBA Part 1 met at the end of a 1 - 4 year programme (4th year of the Bachelor in Architectural Engineering)**

RIBA Part 2 at the end of a 5 & 6 year programme (graduation level of Bachelor in Architectural Engineering plus 1 year postgraduate course leading to Master in Architecture)

The next RIBA visiting board will take place in: 2023

9 Standard requirements for continued recognition

Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

- i external examiners being appointed for the course
- ii any significant changes to the courses and qualifications being submitted to the RIBA
- iii any change of award title, and the effective date of the change, being notified to the RIBA so that its recognition may formally be transferred to the new title
- iv submission to the RIBA of the names of students passing the courses and qualifications listed
- v In the UK, standard requirements of validation include the completion by the institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

10 Academic position statement

The Faculty of Architecture – Design and Built Environment at Beirut Arab University is one of the oldest schools of architecture in Lebanon, founded more than 55 years ago. Since its establishment, the faculty of architecture has played an essential role in a contested geographical setting like Lebanon that has been confronted by long periods of struggle. In the time of conflicts, it maintained its responsibilities to inspire promising generations of architects to build the future of their homeland. In fact, many of these had a vital role to play in reconstructing cities in the post-war era, with their community-serving projects. The new faculty branch in Tripoli, which was launched in 2010, is following the same steps as the Faculty in Debbieh.

The privilege of being among the few RIBA-accredited programmes in the region places our study programmes in a prominent position, both nationally and regionally. The faculty strives for further expansion and strengthening of its international cooperation for both campuses. Funded projects take place (e.g. SouthMed CV, co-funded by the European Union under the Med Culture regional programme in 2017), and international guest lecturers and speakers regularly visit and hold workshops. Furthermore, we pride ourselves on international cooperation between different schools (e.g. organizing and preparing the international seminar of the Revolt in the Square at BAU Debbieh Campus with the United Kingdom teams from Queen's University Belfast and the University of Leeds), and summer schools are held (e.g. "digital design and fabrication" summer school at the Digital Fabrication Lab, BAU Debbieh Campus). Our students also often take part in international summer schools (e.g. International Summer School, Italy 2016 and 2017) and field trips (Italy, 2013; Spain, 2014; France, Belgium and Netherlands, 2016; and Austria, Czech Republic and Germany, 2017).

Ethos

The Faculty of Architecture has a tradition rooted in a history of social and cultural responsibilities towards our local context. Lebanese cities such as Beirut and Tripoli serve as a permanent laboratory for design assignments. The faculty holds close ties with the professional community in Lebanon: public services, governorates, municipalities, authorities and developers. Recently, the faculty has conducted meetings with the municipality of Al Mina in order to carry out a series of studies at both the urban and architectural design levels. Preceded by serious collaboration between the faculty and the municipalities of Machha and Helba in 2014 and 2015, students and professors are currently engaged with different municipalities in addition to the Order of Engineers and Architects in Tripoli in order to tackle a series of problems related to the development of the city. In addition, our students have engaged in a number of local and international competitions that have expanded their design abilities (e.g. Amsterdam children's playschool, and being among the top ten special mentioned in the international competition of Skypool, Paris). Successful workshops have also taken place in cooperation with the Order of Engineers (e.g. LEED workshop in 2014). This sense of belonging and connection with our homeland, together with the ambitious and entrepreneurial nature of the Lebanese students, has led us to be more defined in our mission.

Our mission is to deliver the professional architectural education necessary for the students' international mobility, seeking to educate diligent architects who practise their career in a responsive manner towards society, culture and the environment at local, regional and international levels.

Teaching and Learning

The education provided at the Faculty of Architecture is established on the belief that the studio is a vehicle for creative rationale:

Under the current heavy flow of the highly unreliable information made available through cyberspace, students are exposed to unsupported arguments and illusive decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Our aim is to provide students with the tools/skills for self-directed, self-disciplined and self-monitored thinking, along with the skills to think analytically, to compare, to contrast, to evaluate, to synthesize, and to apply with reduced instruction or supervision – in short, to be thinkers more than followers. Our students learn to rely on questioning, analysis and exploration through an iterative process in order to inform the outcomes. This type of engagement allows students to look for less obvious relationships, to react to unexpected circumstances and to rationalize creatively. This teaching method is communicated to all staff through semi-annual induction. It relies upon the creative and effective use of criticism while supporting the increasing independence of each student, fostered through project-based, student-centred and problem-led learning.

The Process

Our design studio practice is currently adopting an integrative rather than dichotomous approach, which employs analogue and digital methods in the design process. We are now pioneering digital methods of both design generation and physical production, especially after the extension of the already present model-making workshop. Our new Digital Fabrication Lab is a

facility that has the possibility of hosting pilot projects and experimental schemes on different research levels related to advanced architecture. Workshops that include staff, students and technical teams together create a dialogue that informs the acquisition of new equipment to develop opportunities and capacities for innovation.

Features of Distinction

Our curriculum is tailored and frequently updated to keep pace with practical, technological and pedagogical challenges, as well as the rapidly changing nature of the profession itself. The development of the curriculum passed in two phases. The initial phase was designed firstly to conform to the requirements of the Order of Engineering and Architects (OEA), as a regulatory body that accredits architecture programmes in Lebanon (BSc of Architectural Engineering). Secondly, it was designed to conform to the criteria and requirements of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (Part 1 & Part 2). This has influenced the development of the curriculum, focusing on both local and regional matters while balancing science, technology, management and culture in design. Our graduates are expected to acquire the necessary competencies to enable them to work efficiently in geographically dispersed collaborative environments. Our Part 1 programme (years 1–4) provides a clearly structured approach that allows a smooth transition from the dependency-learning pattern of the pre-university student to that of being an independent learner capable of developing a concept into a complete set of drawings. Part 1 students are also able to integrate technical, aesthetic, cultural and theoretical knowledge to inform their design process and outcome. Research and practice empowers a holistic design approach in our Part 2 education (years 5–6), incorporating architectural and execution design courses, contributing to a deeper understanding of technical expertise within the design process.

Our Environment

Beirut Arab University allocates high-quality investments in order to evolve six types of space that help in delivering our academic ethos and are organised to support our pedagogy:

Design Studios: Managed and organized by each level's coordinator for analogue drawing and conceptual/study model-making. The design studio is also the primary space for desk, peer and group critique.

The Basement Hall with Skylight: Used on a rotating basis for panel critique and juries.

Digital Fabrication Lab: The new facilities have provided the possibility of hosting pilot projects and experimental schemes on different research levels related to advanced architecture. The workshop is equipped with 3D printers, laser cutters and a CNC milling machine, in addition to a series of manual tools that complement the facility in the production of a wide range of study models and real-scale prototypes.

Laboratories: Computers and a recently established environmental lab with a range of instruments in the area of buildings' energy efficiency, thermal comfort and indoor environmental quality.

Lecture rooms: A wide range of digitally equipped lecture rooms and theatres that support the delivery of knowledge and events.

Library: Library resources, supported by specialist librarians, that enable access to a vast amount of recently published materials for students and staff.

Interpretation of the Validation Criteria

In our faculty's effort to develop its ethos of "social responsibility within an international market", we envision the validation criteria as providing an important opportunity and indicator to assist in designing and developing our learning objectives and outcomes, mapping performance to their pedagogical expectations through well-designed assessment, as well as developing our teaching and learning activities. As a whole, this validation offers an effective means to assist students' convenient competencies development, provide support for international benchmarking for our quality assurance and offer greater diversity of local and international opportunities for our graduates.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the school in its approach to supporting students to establish a good work ethic and systematic, methodical approach to their studies.
- 11.2 The board commends the enthusiasm and commitment of the student body which is closely supported by the dedicated staff team.
- 11.3 The board commends the ongoing development of specialist workshop facilities available to students within the Tripoli campus, offering greater parity with the Debbieh campus.
- 11.4 The board commends the staff and students' efforts to facilitate the board's visit, and to ensure as far as possible that that coherent and comprehensive information and resources have been provided to support the RIBA validation process.

12 Action points

The visiting board proposes the following action points. The RIBA expects the university to report on how it will address these action points. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 12.1 The school should consider how specialist teaching opportunities and techniques which are currently available to a small number of students through extra-curricular workshops, summer schools etc, can become core components of a contemporary architectural education, and how these may be made available to the cohort as a whole.
- 12.2 The school should expand the current programme specification for each award to provide a concise and coherent document articulating the scope, overall aims and objectives of the programmes, the progressive aims and objectives from level to level and how these build sequentially. The specification should include key learning and teaching methods and particular themes and areas of interest that inform each programme.

- 12.3 The school should consider how the potential of specific circumstances of Tripoli's unique architectural, social and economic context and contemporary challenges informs the choice and nature of design projects set and the range of resulting outputs and documentation. The school should further consider the opportunity this provides for students to test their proposals within the real world and to communicate these to a wide range of audiences including the municipality, the local profession and other stakeholders.
- 12.4 The board recommends the school consider how the use of contextual studies and research is better deployed to inform the design process and is more fully represented within design proposals to provide a more accurate reference point for design work and to capture qualitative and experiential characteristics of the proposal and the surrounding environment.
- 12.5 The board strongly recommends that the school considers ways of developing the Graduation Project (ARCH 540) to demonstrate greater coherent spatial ambition, technological strategy, synthesis and resolution, and a clear progression from the design work carried out in the Part 1 and semester 1 of the Part 2.

13. Advice

The visiting board offers the following advice to the school on desirable, but not essential improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards.

- 13.1 The board advises the school to make greater use of appropriate external reference points such as the RIBA President's Medals website to inform and encourage greater emphasis on quality of design and representation.
- 13.2 The board strongly recommends that the school consider how the design approaches embedded within the level 6 Design-Build project (ARCH 631&632) are introduced earlier within the programmes to allow students to benefit from the related learning and teaching strategies and collaborative experience.

14 Delivery of academic position

15 Delivery of graduate attributes

It should be noted that where the Visiting Board considered graduate attributes to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or an attribute clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a graduate attribute was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

Graduate Attributes for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates.

Graduate Attributes for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates.

16 Review of work against criteria

It should be noted that where the Visiting Board considered a criterion to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a criterion clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a criterion was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

Graduate Criteria for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate criteria were met by graduates.

Graduate Criteria for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate criteria were met by graduates.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

At the time of the 2018 RIBA Visiting Board: 177

17.2 Documentation provided

The School provided all advance documentation in accordance with the validation procedures.

***Notes of meetings**

On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings:

- **Budget holder and course leaders**
- **Students**
- **Head of institution**
- **External examiners**
- **Staff**