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Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA Full visiting board to Ravensbourne University London

Date of visiting board: 7 & 8 December 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 16 April 2024

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1   Details of institution hosting courses
Ravensbourne University
6 Penrose Way
North Greenwich
London
SE10 0EW

2   Courses offered for Part 1 validation
BA (Hons) Architecture
BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs)

3   Head of Department
Alberto Villanueva

Course Leader BA (Hons) Architecture
Luke Murray

Course Leader BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures
Owain Caruana-Davis

4   Awarding body
Ravensbourne University London

5   The visiting board
Albena Atanassova – Chair
Christina Godiksen – Vice Chair
Bernadette Donohoe

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – Validation manager

6   Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education
The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this document is available at www.architecture.com.

7   Proposals of the visiting board
On 16 April 2024 the RIBA confirmed unconditional validation for Part 1 of the following courses:

- BA (Hons) Architecture
- BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs)

The next visiting board to Ravensbourne University will take place in 2028.

8   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 of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

9   Academic position statement (written by the School)

A place for change makers

The Department of Architecture at Ravensbourne is a passionate and welcoming community open for collaboration and aiming to impact our society through architectural education. The team is committed to a model that blends creativity with technology to create a space for every student to discover their role and voice in the built environment. Our students develop their work through a culture of critical, practical, and creative engagement as innovative and inquisitive designers and thinkers.

Our approach to architecture and spatial design bridges creativity, design, technology, and the building environment in a unique space where our students co-live and learn in a cross-disciplinary environment. We propose questions and empower our students, staff, and practitioners to constantly discuss the latest issues affecting the profession in an environment of collaboration and co-creation.

Our ethos and pedagogical approach enable our students through a hybrid journey where digital and craft coexist. We propose three clear strands that are not separate features but are combined and part of a whole: climate emergency and sustainability, social impact and community and inter/cross-disciplinarity in creativity, design and technology. All supported by the integration of industry at university. We have developed a strong framework and position, where we ensure that all students experience and envision who they want to be as citizens of the world and graduate with a unique set of skills.

Our community strives, not only to excel in design - which serves as the cornerstone of architecture - but also to equip our students with invaluable abilities like leadership, teamwork, and adaptability to emerging technologies. These aptitudes are just as vital to ensuring the profession's resilience in the years to come.

We strongly advocate for providing Ravensbourne's skilled practitioners to apply and share their expertise within the built environment and across disciplines. This, in turn, enables them to exert influence on the Our institution has supported us in creating a space of open opportunities for collaboration, from the cluster level across architecture, interiors, and landscape, to the creative subjects around design and technology in creative economies. There is a shared aspiration to forge close ties between architecture and creative areas in teaching, knowledge exchange and research.

Our creative clusters collaborate transversely in this creative environment (Design Practice, Architecture, Film and TV, Media Works and Business and Computing) to replicate the reality of our professional environments and understand the complexity of collaboration in the fast-forward creative industries and the built environment. Therefore, our architecture students

might explore urban interventions in collaboration with photographers or filmmakers, while our students in interiors might explore techniques and materials around their structure briefs with the fashion students. All of this is not only supported by staff with skills and a reputation in the creative sector but also by maximising our location and facilities in and around London, and within our industry collaborative network. We work in partnership with large-scale renowned firms, but also with local architecture studios to find live opportunities to embed into our curriculum.

As part of Ravensbourne's philosophy, we continue with our commitment to building and empowering our diverse community of students and staff, offering a wide range of approaches and opportunities in architecture. Therefore, we are committed to an ambitious access and participation plan that aims to ensure that our future graduating students have an opportunity to start and explore the subject area and succeed as part of and in shaping the profession. This is part of a whole institution approach that begins with our outreach and recruitment strategy through to supporting successful graduate outcomes.

In addition to our curriculum, we achieve this through our induction and onboarding experience, opportunities for student mentoring and enhanced academic support, problem solving opportunities, and an ethical approach to considering local to global challenges that are meaningful to our diverse student body. Ravensbourne is committed to contributing to change the current context of the industry at every level, from our belief that creativity is best driven by diversity.

Our focus on collaborative and interdisciplinary work, examining and applying problem-solving skills and ethical design proposals including communities and adapting to the climate emergency are all principal attributes of our graduates. Architecture at Ravensbourne looks forward to continuing to play our part in the future development of London and its surrounding context, growing our diverse student body and our reputation as an institution that is inclusive, caring and impactful on society through our model of architectural education.

Architecture
Architecture at Ravensbourne embraces the changing nature of our urban environment and the need for the profession to adapt accordingly, whether this be related to design techniques and representation, regulation, or economic factors. The course actively seeks the design and proposition of new structures that encapsulate our three strands:

climate emergency and sustainability
Preparing students with the knowledge and skills related to the principles of the climate emergency and the architect's role within it. The modules allow students to critically examine context and create architectural proposals that respond to it through material, detail design, energy, safety, and performance.

social impact and community
The impact of design on its users and the wider implications of new constructions on existing communities alongside architecture's ability to create new ones. Resource efficiency and ethical practice underpin design

projects, as material sourcing and production, circular design, and transport all inform design decisions in our local context.

inter/cross-disciplinarity
Working closely and cohesively with each other through peer activities and feedback, but also extending our reach to other courses in the Department, the Institution, and externally.

Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs)
IDEAs embrace the Department strands through a commitment to exploring the potential of our existing building stock. The course focuses on adaptive reuse and regeneration at different scales so that students explore designs of different complexity and typology, appropriate to the context. This allows students to test spatial atmospheres, user comfort, and question the longevity of use of existing buildings:

climate emergency and sustainability
Projects question the impact of space with emphasis on the impact of internal environment on the health and wellbeing of its users; the cultural merit of existing buildings; and added social value through design proposals.

social impact and community
Understanding user experience and our relationship with space, inclusion, and equality enable students to design flexible and adaptable spaces that react to user needs and experiences and embrace environmental features of designs from lighting, air, water, plants, habitats, and sounds.

inter/cross-disciplinarity
Working closely and cohesively with each other through peer activities and feedback, but also extending our reach to other courses in the Department, the Institution, and externally.

10   Commendations
10.1   The Board commends the School on the organisation of the RIBA visit, the clarity of the course information provided and recognises the significant efforts in addressing some of the challenges faced over the past few years, represented by the resilience of the Head of the Department.

10.2   The Board commends the dedicated staff team for their commitment in creating a culture and sense of belonging at Ravensbourne in particular demonstrated in their widening participation agenda and support offered to students.

10.3   The Board commends the inter-disciplinary approach to education and open engagement in student feedback resulting in an articulated, committed and confident cohort of students, who pride themselves in the work produced and the potential contribution to the wider community.

11   Conditions
There are no conditions.

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. The university is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

12.1   As both programs continue to evolve and see growth in future student numbers the University must ensure appropriate support structures and expertise are in place to safeguard the School's culture, professional development of staff and curriculum in meeting the 2021 RIBA Themes and Values and Graduate Attributes for part 1.

12.2   The School must continue to foster ambition in the student work, placing special emphasis on improving the quality of work at the lower pass threshold in order to help increase students' employability and enhance opportunities for advancing their academic careers.

12.3   The School must promote design exploration evidenced in process work through engagement with 3 dimensional exploration in order to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of architecture.

12.4   The School must continue to develop opportunities for engagement with practice-based teaching staff and external specialist input from architecture and other built environment backgrounds.

12.5   To build on the distinctiveness of the two courses the Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs) pathway must evidence further experimentation and understanding of operational building strategies, building fabric performance and the end user experience of the spaces created.

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 encourage the School to continue to develop the cross university creative culture and development of interdisciplinary skills and varied methods of communicating architecture.

13.2   The School should continue to monitor and alleviate where appropriate student workload in recognition of external commitments.

13.3   The Board would encourage the professional studies module to explore means of maintaining and demonstrating professional competence through CPD.

13.4   The School should encourage staff and students to visit end of year exhibitions in other Schools of Architecture.

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14   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 of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture and BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs) programmes.

15   Review of work against Themes and Values
It should be noted that where the visiting board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a T&V were clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a T&V was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

Themes and Values for Part 1
The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture and BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEA) programmes.

16   Other information

16.1   Student numbers
Part 1: BA (Hons) Architecture - 158
Part 1: BA (Hons) Interior Design Environment Architectures (IDEAs) - 80

16.2   Documentation provided
The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

17   Notes of meetings
On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings: **These notes will not form part of the published report but will be made available on request. The full set of notes will be issued to the mid-term panel and the next full visiting board.**

- Meeting with architecture budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with Head of Institution
- Meeting with staff