
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to University College Dublin (UCD)**

Date of visiting board: 27 and 28 September 2018
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 13 February 2019

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**
School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy
University College Dublin
Richview, Clonskeagh
Dublin
D14 E099
Ireland
- 2 Dean of Architecture and Head of Subject**
Dr Hugh Campbell
- 3 Courses offered for validation**
Bachelor of Science in Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture, Part 2
- 4 Awarding body**
University College Dublin
- 5 The visiting board**
Dr Jenny Russell (Chair)
Carol Norton (Vice Chair)
Dr Susannah Hagan
Stacey Smith
Professor Doug King

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – validation manager – in attendance.
- 6 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.
- 7 Proposals of the visiting board**
At its meeting on 13 February 2019 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional revalidation of the following:

Bachelor of Science in Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture, Part 2

The next full visiting board will take place in 2023.
- 8 Standard requirements for continued recognition**
Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

 - i external examiners, or an acceptable alternative, being appointed for the course
 - ii any significant changes to the courses and qualifications being submitted to the RIBA

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- 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

9 Academic position statement (written by the School)

UCD Architecture is at the centre of Ireland’s architectural culture; it operates within the immediate framework of the practice of architecture in Ireland and in the larger context of international architecture. Its mission is to prepare students for careers in architecture and related fields, to be a genuine learning laboratory and testing ground for the architectural profession, and to make a strong contribution to architectural and interdisciplinary research. Accordingly, UCD Architecture promotes a close, dynamic relationship between teaching and research, the profession, the industry and the culture at large. This mission informs all aspects of its activities, and particularly its main teaching programmes.

Practice and the Profession

UCD Architecture has a long history of producing excellent practitioners. Prominent alumni include Pritzker Prize winner Kevin Roche, RIBA Gold Medal Winners Michael Scott and Sheila O’Donnell and John Tuomey; YAYA winners Niall MacLaughlin, Tom De Paor and Andrew Clancy; Roisin Heneghan of Heneghan Peng and Grafton Architects’ Yvonne Farrell and Shelley MacNamara. Practitioners – among them almost all of the above - have always been centrally involved in teaching architecture at UCD. The great majority of studio modules are led and taught by practicing architects who are at the forefront of their field, their work recognised through awards, publication and competition success. Practitioners hold fractional academic positions, at full professor and lecturer/assistant professor level, which encourage and enable them to produce research and scholarship relating to their practice. From 2018, a new role of Design Fellow is being introduced, to recognise the large number of other practitioners and part-time teachers who contribute to the teaching of design. These new roles promise further to bolster the critical place of practice within architecture at UCD. In another new initiative, thematic workshops with senior figures from larger commercial firms will be introduced in 2018, allowing students to engage critically with a wider range of models of practice. This follows the introduction of two new modules to the undergraduate programme – Into Practice and Frameworks for Practice, the former an introduction to the realities of professional practice across a range of disciplines, the latter a deeper engagement with the regulatory, technical and production frameworks within which contemporary practice operates.

Research and Innovation

In line with UCD's mission as a research-intensive university, the large majority of Architecture faculty are research-active, publishing monographs, book chapters and journal articles, leading funded research projects and supervising postgraduate students. Areas of particular strength include the history of architecture and landscape, sustainable design and building performance. The expansion of the school to include planning and environmental policy alongside landscape architecture has drawn in a significant amount of new research activity as well as facilitating more interdisciplinary work in areas such as heritage planning, resilience and smart cities. Besides its scholarly value and recognition, much of this research also has impact in the sector, facilitated by increased funding for enterprise and industry-based PhDs. Research fundamentally informs teaching, in terms of the knowledge being imparted through lectures and seminars but also through studio projects and dissertations. Students, particularly at graduate level, participate in coursework which feeds into and off faculty's research projects. At graduate level, cultural and technical modules are fully oriented towards research.

Exhibition and dissemination

UCD faculty and alumni are active in exhibiting and disseminating architecture. 2018 is a highly significant year in this regard, with alumni and Adjunct Professors Shelley MacNamara and Yvonne Farrell curating the 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture, Freespace. Two assistant professors, Alice Clancy and Emmett Scanlon were instrumental in every aspect of the exhibition in their role as Assistants to the Curators. Hugh Campbell, Dean of Architecture, collaborated with Shelley and Yvonne in the Close Encounter section of the exhibition, which included pieces from six faculty members. Professors O'Donnell and Tuomey also featured in the main international exhibition as did a number of alumni. Assistant Professor Orla Murphy was a member of the curatorial team for the Irish Pavilion, Freespace, alongside a number of alumni. Final-year MArch students produced a video piece for the parallel exhibition in Venice Space, Time Existence. As well as serving to further reinforce UCD's international connections and networks, this unparalleled presence in Venice offers the opportunity to highlight and develop the areas of dissemination and exhibition within our programmes and in future collaborations and partnerships.

Partnerships and networks

Partnerships are centrally important to UCD Architecture's core activities. Studio programmes often develop partnerships with external agencies, groups and companies in order to align closely with real-world scenarios and issues. Partnerships also allow more ambitious programmes of visitors and events. Recent and current partners include Peter McVerry Trust, Hammersons, Dublin Port Company, Irish Architecture Foundation among others. Research partnerships extend across many other disciplines within the university, from art history to computer science to materials and

mechanical engineering, as well as numerous international networks involved in funded projects. Finally, an extensive network of international exchange partners, including over 40 Erasmus partners, facilitates over 70% of UCD students studying abroad for a semester and a large number of incoming students. This international network also facilitates staff exchange, joint projects and research initiatives to develop.

The Programmes

All of these characteristics of UCD Architecture feed into a programme which is informed and fed by research, related continuously to practice, sustained and enriched by partnerships, open to collaboration, increasingly oriented towards dissemination and exhibition and globally connected and informed. This wide-ranging educational ethos has always been anchored by the specific requirements of professional accreditation. All graduates are required to demonstrate the 11 core competences set out by the EU Directive on Architecture (85/384EEC), which in turn forms the basis of more detailed lists of competences required by accrediting bodies. In every area, from technical and regulatory to cultural and aesthetic, these competencies span knowledge, understanding, skill and ability. In keeping with its continuous benchmarking against the highest international standards, in early 2018, UCD acquired Substantial Equivalency accreditation from the NAAB, the US accrediting body. This both facilitates the increasing intake of international students, and allows UCD graduates to enter practice more easily around the world.

Philosophy and Culture

*The emphasis in the Undergraduate cycle continues to be on the acquisition and demonstration of a wide range of essential competencies and capacities. The ethos of research and innovation is also introduced. At Masters level, the emphasis on innovation, investigation and original creative work is underpinned by a due regard for rigor, depth and precision, by a firm foundation in advanced methodologies and skills, and by a robust engagement with the broader disciplinary, regulatory and societal frameworks within which professionals must operate. The expectation is that graduates are able to act competently within a framework of knowledge and a context of understanding. Both lecture-based and studio modules allow the introduction of content and projects which derive from, or feed into current research activity. Studio projects in particular have the capacity to produce work of analysis, survey and design that can provide important content and groundwork for research work. This flexibility and adaptability is one of the programme's key strengths: it can shape itself to opportunity and to circumstance. Without diluting their educational purpose, studio work and other assignments acquire a feeling of urgency and of relevance to the current discourse and situation – as evidenced, for instance, by *Rising home*, a recent sequence of housing studios in year 4.*

The programme in architecture places creativity and the design process at its centre. From the outset, students are engaged in creative thinking and problem solving. They are required to take ownership of their work, to direct its development and to learn through their self-directed actions. While lectures and seminars play an important role in the architecture programme, the design studio is the focal point. For students, the educational experience revolves around a collective space within which each has her or his own workplace. The studio supports a series of unique 'settings for learning', each with their own ratios and relationships. Students experience a high degree of autonomy and self-awareness, a n expectation of engagement and a high level of individualized input and feedback. The extent of individual tuition received by a student (usually calculated at an hour a week) is probably unique, and certainly unusual within the university, but it is vital to the nurturing of creative action. The challenge to students to produce and perform is matched by a commitment to support and direct their individual interests and directions.

Summary

UCD Architecture is locally rooted but globally connected, that is to say that while it is symbiotically linked to Ireland's architectural culture and practice, it is resolutely international in its outlook and ambitions. While it is committed to producing capable and committed graduates, equipped for professional life, it recognises that the nature of practice and of professional life is changing. Its graduates must be prepared to adapt in response to this change, but they must also be capable of inventing their own futures.

10. Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the staff's clear commitment to the culture of architecture in Ireland and beyond.
- 10.2 The Board commends the clarity of pedagogical approach in the first-year design studio, which successfully launches students into their architectural studies.
- 10.3 The Board commends the use of meaningful collaborative practice in year 3, allowing the students to understand the importance of both authorship and production.
- 10.4 The Board commends the fourth-year design studio for its use of the theme of dwelling to embed the contribution of the Erasmus students. This derives a common approach which leads to a richness of strategy and typology, whilst challenging current social policy.
- 10.5 The Board commends the School on the value that it places on the departmental library and workshop facilities and the quality of their support staff. The benefits are evident in student work and these should be protected to ensure continued high standards.

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 The School should ensure that students are made aware at application that digital teaching will take place on their own laptop of an appropriate specification. Software packages used in teaching should be made available to students free or at reduced cost. The institution must retain sufficient licences for software that is not freely available to students.

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 strongly advises the institution to reconsider the administrative support to the school to allow the teaching staff to focus on programme and delivery and not on basic administration tasks.
- 13.2 The Board was pleased to note the introduction of new, university-wide academic regulations in 2019. In light of this, the Board strongly advises that the School develops a formal formative and summative feedback procedure standard across all years to enable students to better manage their own learning.
- 13.3 The Board advises the institution to ensure that, with the introduction of the new post of Design Fellow, all staff involved in the delivery of the programme receive support to develop their teaching and learning skills.
- 13.4 The Board suggest that the School makes explicit where professional studies are integrated into studio projects. This will be helpful for students and future visiting boards.
- 13.5 The Board suggests that students are given support in the compilation of professional portfolios and cvs in preparation for entering the workplace.

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.

15.1 Part 1

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

15.2 Part 2

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

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.

16.1 The Board made no further comments.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

Part 1: 180

Part 2: 70

17.2 Documentation provided

The School provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

18. 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 budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with senior university management
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff