

## **Report of the RIBA visiting board to the Metropolitan College, Athens**

**Date of virtual visiting board: 23 & 24 September 2021**  
**Confirmed by RIBA: 1 March 2022**

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

MC Metropolitan College  
Faculty of Engineering & Architecture  
74 Sorou str., Maroussi  
151 25, Athens, Greece

**1.1 Franchise Partner BA (Hons) Architecture**

University of East London  
University Way  
London E16 2RD  
UK

**1.2 Franchise Partner MArch Architecture and Urban Design**

Oxford Brookes University  
Headington Road  
Headington  
Oxford OX3 0BP  
UK

**2 Dean of Architecture & Engineering Faculty**

Yiannis Kerabos

**Head of School of Architecture**

Dr Elena Douvlou

**3 Programmes offered for validation**

BA (Hons) Architecture (under franchise from the University of East London - UEL)

**Programme offered for Candidate Course status**

MArch Architecture and Urban Design (under franchise from Oxford Brookes University - OBU)

**4 Programme Leaders**

BA (Hons) Architecture (UEL) – Andreas Kourteridis  
MArch Architecture and Urban Design (OBU) - Dr Elena Douvlou

**5 Awarding body**

BA (Hons) Architecture - University of East London  
MArch Architecture and Urban Design – Oxford Brookes University

**6 The visiting board**

Professor Sally Stewart, Chair  
Sara Shafiei  
Dr Sara Biscaya  
George Savaides – regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – validation manager – in attendance  
Jayesha Fernando – interim validation manager – observing

**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](http://www.architecture.com).

The timetable was modified to allow the Board to work remotely, to accommodate the time difference between the UK and Athens.

**8 Recommendations of the visiting board**

8.1 On 1 March 2022 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the:

BA (Hons) Architecture Part 1 - University of East London

As the UEL programme is in phase-out mode there will be no further visits. The final cohort of the UEL Part 1 should emerge in 2022/2023. There will be one more year in 2023/2024 to capture any remaining or repeating students.

8.2 On 1 March 2022 the RIBA confirmed candidate course status for Part 2 validation of the:

MArch Architecture and Urban Design (OBU)

The designation 'Candidate Course for Validation' implies that the course has been judged to have the potential to meet RIBA criteria, if implemented as anticipated. It is not, however, equivalent to recognition, which can only be granted once the standard of work produced by graduating students has been assessed and found satisfactory.

A full visiting board to consider the MArch Architecture and Urban for full validation will take place in 2022.

**9 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 programme
- 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 (written by the School)**

The MArch Architecture and Urban Design programme was introduced at Metropolitan College in September 2020. The integration of Urban Design distinguishes the MArch Architecture & Urban Design at Metropolitan College from the other architecture programmes in Greece. The School's aim is to deliver a high-quality student learning and teaching experience in an environment of a strong student community. The School benefits from the shared understanding of the UK approach and is enriched by the breadth of international experience among the academic staff.

The course aims to prepare graduates for a wide range of professional activities in the field of architecture and urban design, with a solid intellectual base of knowledge from the urban to the building scale, professional practice, the application of technology and representation and the methodological approach of research in design. Students develop their own identity with a professional portfolio and learn how meet professional aspirations. Module briefs incorporate the Athenian landscape as a field of study providing an adaptation of the OBU programme to local conditions providing intellectually challenging learning framework for students. Various methods of teaching are employed to forge connections between supporting subject and design studio to strengthen integration; including presentation, history and theory, technology, management, practice and law – increasing the students' understanding that synthesis is core and encouraging them to find their own identity.

In the first year, the course aims to actively engage students with the urban scale: to provide a lens through which to view and interpret the urban context and to be critically engaged in the research and practice of creative and rigorous design proposals. Students are invited to carry out urban analysis and translate it into physical Urban Strategies and Masterplanning. They establish design criteria for developing projects, designing public spaces, while accounting for built, human, and natural systems within the direct and indirect context of their sites. Furthermore, students will advance their knowledge and skills through the modules of research methods for design, management practice and law, as well as the creative application of advanced representation methods.

The second-year structure allows students to critically engage in an individually chosen design project and the pragmatic application of technology, environmental strategies as well as the role and ethos of the architectural professional practice. The Design Studio modules, engage students in developing projects iteratively towards a level of completion that encapsulates their individual design philosophy. The ever-changing social dynamics, the topography, nature, and landscape, the historical past and the current challenges of the architectural profession are researched, analysed, and debated. Consequently, students are requested to pursue their own original and rigorous architecture, integrating their knowledge and skills acquired in other modules into their design module portfolio. This also distinguishes the course from other architectural schools in Greece where each module has an independent role within its programme structure. Enabling students to develop their own briefs related to the subject and scale of their chosen Thesis Project and the requirement to relate this to a research

output, results in a specialization within the course and highly diverse range of projects.

Through an intensive series of design studio and theory-related briefs, students are required to follow a curriculum in which the aim is to stimulate their critical thinking and creative powers through a sequence of problem-solving exercises. Students are expected to demonstrate a critical position through thorough research, to explore ideas and create narratives and to represent them creatively; this distinguishes the MArch course from the Part 1 course delivered at MC. The change of design projects between the undergraduate and post-graduate courses facilitates the process of developing independent thinking and resolving design issues in a different scale. A key emphasis of the course is the encouragement of the development of a range of transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, independent learning, as well as teamwork that will be of value to students in employment, in society and in their individual lives as architecture practitioners. Lectures and workshops have also been revised and integrated to respond to the newly introduced RIBA new Themes and Values, and specifically related to address issues such as climate change, social equity, diversity, and inclusion and how these societal issues can be incorporated into an architectural programme as elements that can enhance design skills and the discipline of architecture.

MC's long-term strategic aim is to develop and enhance its identity as a School of Architecture, creating synergies that extend beyond local, promoting and extending current European and U.S. Architecture Schools and Universities collaborations as well as our current franchise collaborators.

## **11 Commendations**

- 11.1 The Board commends the institution's investment in the development of teaching facilities, and the expansion of library and workshop facilities. This has supported the School's transformation of its learning and teaching environment. This includes both the physical environment and the virtual in response to the 2020 Covid pandemic.
- 11.2 The Board commends the support provided by staff for their students, particularly in the pursuit of establishing a flourishing architectural community.

## **12 Conditions**

There are no conditions.

## **13 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.

Action points 13.1 and 13.2 apply to both programmes.

- 13.1 The course team should revise the academic position statement to more explicitly and concisely articulate the innovative and distinctive nature of the MC course portfolio and academic proposition.
- 13.2 The course team should consider how students can be enabled to establish a student society to support the development of student led activities.
- 13.3 The course team should consider the development of a wider range of precedents to embrace further diversity and equality, and to represent the local and well as the global generally.

Action points 13.4 to 13.5 apply to the MArch Architecture and Urban Design:

- 13.4 Oxford Brookes should explore fully the opportunities available for staff and student collaborations with MC to enhance the student experience and to support the development of shared content, activities and cultures.

This should also be considered in relation to the development of Part 1 provision.

- 13.5 With Oxford Brookes University, the course team should consider how external examiners are supported to ensure parity in grading and benchmarking across programme course cohorts at MC and in the UK.

#### **14. 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.

- 14.1 The School is advised to anticipate how the MArch Architecture and Urban Design and the planned Oxford Brookes undergraduate programme will meet the new RIBA Themes and Values.
- 14.2 During the remaining years of the UEL BA Part 1, the phasing-out arrangements should be clearly communicated to staff and students.

#### **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 by the graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture (UEL).

**15.2 Part 2**

The Board confirmed that the MArch Architecture and Urban Design (OBU) had the potential to meet the Part 2 graduate attributes and criteria, if implemented as anticipated.

**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**

Student numbers of cohorts being evaluated:

BA (Hons) Architecture (UEL)

Year 1 (Level 4)= 10 Students

Year 2 (Level 5)= 19 Students

Year 3 (Level 6)= 7 Students

MArch Architecture and Urban Design

Year 1 (Level 7)= 6 students

**17.2 Documentation provided**

The Department 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 Dean, Head of Architecture and Programme Leader
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the head of institution
- Meeting with external examiners and franchise representatives
- Meeting with staff