

Report of the RIBA exploratory visiting board to the Caucasus University

Caucasus School of Technology

Tbilisi, Georgia

Date of virtual exploratory board: 30 June 2022/1 July 2022
Confirmed by the RIBA: 15 September 2022

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Caucasus School of Technology
Caucasus University
Tbilisi
Georgia

2 Courses offered for candidate course status

BA in Architecture

3 Programme Leader

Mariam Menabde

4 Awarding body

Caucasus University

5 The exploratory visiting board

Professor Sally Stewart, Chair
Dr Sara Biscaya – Vice Chair
Dr Luigi Pintacuda
David Danelia

In attendance:

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – validation manager

6 Procedures for the virtual visit

The visiting board was carried out under the *RIBA procedures for validation (2021)*; this document is available at www.architecture.com. The procedures were adapted to allow the Board to take place remotely.

7 Proposals of the exploratory board

On 15 September 2022 the RIBA confirmed Candidate Course status for Part 1 for the following programme.

BA in Architecture

Candidate course for validation status is recommended if the course content and structure are considered to have the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated.

A full visiting board to consider the programme for initial validation and full RIBA recognition of Part 1 will take place at a date to be agreed by the RIBA. This will be no sooner than 12 months from the date of this visit.

The Board can consider graduated cohorts provided a sufficient sample of their work is retained.

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, if appropriate to the relevant local context.
- 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)

The mission of the Caucasus School of Technology is to train students according to the latest requirements in the field, to develop high-level specialists who have theoretical knowledge in the field and the skills necessary for research or practical work; Creation of a competitive learning environment, introduction of proven teaching methodologies at leading Western universities, development of relevant field programs with the participation of highly qualified academic staff.

The Caucasus School of Technology offers Undergraduate Program in Architecture, that has been developed to prepare a Bachelor in Architecture meeting modern requirements. Students learn basics of architecture, basic principles and methods of design as well as modern technologies of design and construction. CST's programme on architecture was one of the pioneers in the region to focus on issues of sustainability, ethics, heritage preservation, health & safety, and other contemporary issues of modern architecture.

The program is designed to include courses in Arts, Drawing, Physics, Mathematics and Computer Programs which lays a solid foundation for acquiring courses in sustainable architecture, architectural planning, urban planning, BIM programs and others. In addition, the program includes general courses and managerial courses which broaden the students' horizon.

Bachelors of Architecture have a wide choice of job opportunities, they can be employed at state and private architectural or engineering offices, at state structures like Local government bodies (licensing, regulatory and controlling); Architectural firms and design studios; Architectural-construction and developer companies; Services and foundations of protecting historical-cultural heritage; etc.

The teaching approaches implemented at CST's BA in architecture are primarily shaped by three core learning objectives:

- To give the student a broad, theoretical architecture-oriented knowledge that he / she will successfully use in architectural design;
- The student acquires multidisciplinary (synthetic) theoretical and practical knowledge based on research, so that he / she can integrate architectural directions based on system analysis;
- The student will be able to design in a historical and urban environment using global architectural values, taking into account the principles of sustainable architecture, safety and professional ethics.

Besides academic programmes, CST is committed towards production of greater amount of impactful intellectual contributions. Currently, our affiliated faculty members are engaged with Georgian government's Green Growth Strategy initiatives and are working with several international non-governmental organisations, representatives of the public and private sectors.

CST organises mission-related activities such as workshops, meetings and open days for students with industry professionals and leaders who conduct master classes, present their projects and etc. These activities are open to all, meaning that students from other institutions may also participate in our activities. CST contributes to the development of practitioners in the architectural field too by conducting seminars and workshops, public lecture for practicing architects. CST actively develops relations between its students and employers. Together with the Career Development Office, CST supports student employment and hosts Open-Door events where partners of the most successful and outstanding companies make presentations and students are given an opportunity to receive information necessary for internship and further employment in the company, face-to-face. To develop practical skills of students and ensure application of theoretical knowledge, CST works closely with its partners who offer trainings either on-campus, on different locations, or within partners' organisations. High school graduates are often invited to architectural competition like "Architectoni" where they have a chance to win grants that cover the tuition fees.

The School is based in the meticulously restored historical building, which is an architectural landmark in its own right. Students of architecture benefit from the cutting-edge architectural, drawing and mock-up studios which provide its students with outstanding learning environment and world class facilities equipped with the newest equipment, IT infrastructure and professional architectural software. Through its architecture studio, the School seeks to nurture the intersection of academia and practice, and to produce regionally-relevant research in the field of architecture.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the ambition of the University and of the School to develop a programme that meets the contemporary and future demands of the profession in its national and regional context.

11 Action points

The visiting board proposes the following action points. The full visiting board will follow these up formally during the next visit. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 11.1 The academic position statement should be revisited to more fully reflect the developing ethos of the School and the distinctiveness of the programme.
- 11.2 The full visiting board will expect to see a comprehensive academic portfolio of work for an agreed sample of students in accordance with the Procedures for Validation. The academic portfolio is described in section 3.8* of the 2021 Procedures document. All items in the italicised list must be included.
- 11.3 The Board draws the School's attention to the Graduate Attributes for Part 1 (section 1.2 of the 2021 Procedures*). The School is required to address all Graduate Attributes in full within the programme.
- 11.4 For the full visiting board the School should provide a full set of the briefs and coursework tasks set to tie in with course and programme specifications. The

Board requires the School to provide assessment criteria, the evidence for moderation and the feedback given to students.

- 11.5 Programme and course learning outcomes should be explicitly mapped to the validation criteria i.e. Themes and Values and the Graduate Attributes at Part 1.

*revised version of 2021 Procedures; to be published in due course.

12 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.

- 12.1 The Board advises the School to strongly consider the staffing structure to support the architecture programme leader and leadership within subject areas such as technology, history and theory and design.
- 12.2 The Board advises the School to consider how courses within years are aligned and co-ordinated with each other and how subjects develop progressively towards the diploma project.
- 12.3 The Board strongly advises the School to consolidate the programme team, considering the balance between full-time and part-time staff, practitioners and specialists.
- 12.4 The Board strongly advises the School to consider what opportunities are provided for staff development, research and career progression.
- 12.5 The Board strongly encourages the School to strengthen its relationship with external advisers or examiners to provide feedback and assist the development of the programme. The Board recognises that there is no formal external examining system in Georgia.
- 12.6 The Board encourages the School to consider how it can develop a unique position within the region, building on the opportunities within the institution and the challenges for architecture in the region.

13 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.

- 13.1 The Board confirmed that the BA in Architecture had the potential to meet the Part 1 graduate attributes.

14 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.

14.1 The Board made no further comments.

15 Other information

15.1 Student numbers

92

15.2 Documentation provided

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

16 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 next full visiting board.**

- Meeting with budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the head of institution
- Meeting with staff