

# **Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of Kent**

**Date of visiting board: 1 February 2022**  
**Confirmed by the RIBA: 3 May 2022**

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

Kent School of Architecture  
University of Kent  
Canterbury  
Kent  
CT2 7NZ

**2 Head of School**

Professor Gerald Adler

**3 Courses offered for validation**

Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice

**4 Programme Director**

Peter Wislocki

**5 Awarding body**

The University of Kent

**6 The visiting board**

Nick Hayhurst  
Simon Gratton

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA validation manager – in attendance

**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, second revision May 2014); this document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

The procedures were adapted to allow the Board to function remotely.

All requirements for documentation and work samples were exactly as for a physical board but viewed remotely.

The timetable and all meetings took place as for a physical board but remotely.

**8 Proposals of the visiting board**

On 3 May 2022 the RIBA confirmed: conditional validation for Part 3, with effect from the 2020 graduating cohort\*:

Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Part 3

A revisiting board will take place when the next cohort graduates, at a date to be agreed between the RIBA and the School.

\*Work from both 2020 and 2021 cohorts was presented.

**9 Standard requirements for validation**

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 (written by the School)**

The PG Diploma in Architectural Practice provides a Part 3 programme alongside the well established architectural Part 1 and Part 2 programmes offered by the Kent School of Architecture and Planning (KSAP).

As such, the course benefits from KSAP's diversity of academic knowledge and research, and the cross-fertilisation between the disciplines of its staff. KSAP is strongly rooted in Kent while pursuing a broad outlook, and the Part 3 course reflects this, with staff and students mostly based in the region but professionally active across the UK and beyond.

Alongside KSAP's existing three research centres it is intended for the Part 3 programme and its core staff to develop a centre of professional expertise and academic excellence, with the aspiration to offer practice-based doctoral programmes, giving the practicalities of the Part 3 criteria and graduate attributes which the PG Dip programme addresses a much richer academic and professional context.

KSAP's situation on a hill overlooking the ancient cathedral city of Canterbury means the School is very close to continental Europe, and several key members of the team delivering the PG Dip programme are professionally active abroad, giving the necessarily UK-based Part 3 a wider international context. The University is located a short walk from HS1 trains which connect to London in less than an hour, so students are able to benefit from the wide cultural and architectural offers of the capital.

The School was renamed KSAP – the Kent School of Architecture and Planning – in 2019, having added a planning Masters to the portfolio. This is due for professional accreditation by the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2021, and cements the School's position as the leading provider of professional built environment education in Kent. This will also offer apprenticeship places to trainees, and the architecture programmes are due to follow once these are up and running. The School has developed many links with architectural and planning professionals in the county, and beyond, and students benefit from the wide range of practitioners who

teach at KSAP, and who contribute to lectures and seminars in the PG Diploma programme.

### **What makes KSAP special**

KSAP boasts a diverse group of some 500 students and approximately 50 teachers, a mix of some 20 academics and a large and diverse group of part-time practitioners, all part of a dynamic faculty within a modern but long-established university. The core group of academics runs KSAP's programmes, stages and modules, including the PG Diploma in Architectural Practice, but this academic direction is augmented by a much larger group of architect-practitioners and co-professionals. It is this engagement with professional, architectural practice and a wide spectrum of co-professionals that keeps the School relevant and practice-oriented.

The Part 3 programme comprises entirely new modules. Many aspects of the PG Diploma curriculum are introduced at a more elementary level in an existing undergraduate Stage 3 module (Professional practice AR555) and graduate Stage 4 module (Employability AR540) which the Programme Director convenes and substantially delivers. The understanding of the Part 3 programme in the context of teaching of professional practice at Part 1 and Part 2 ensures that all three stages of architectural education are addressed at an appropriate level in relation to students' academic knowledge, practical experience and learning needs.

Specifically, whereas Part 1 provides a basic introduction to all topics, Part 2 promotes lateral thinking and questioning of conventional practices, and Part 3 greatly deepens detailed knowledge as a basis for mature and responsible decision-making in complex and unforeseeable circumstances.

The Part 3 course has been designed to

- provide a gateway to professional practice, complementing Kent's established courses in architecture
- enable current Kent students to complete their professional training at the University
- offer graduates of other universities to complete their professional training in Kent
- be the only course of its kind offered anywhere in the county
- draw on the academic and professional knowledge and contacts of existing University staff
- enable the University to offer a graduate apprenticeship in Architecture

As above - the course is expected to attract students from the following groups (in approximate order of importance):

- Existing Kent students wishing to complete their professional training
- Graduates of other universities working and/or residing in Kent
- Applicants in London and the South East looking for an alternative Part 3 programme, attracted by the PG Diploma's USPs and/or other (personal, financial or logistical) issues

### **Course overview and distinctiveness**

The PGDip's core curriculum is based directly on the RIBA/ARB criteria for Part 3 graduates (see [http://www.arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ARB\\_Criteria\\_pt3.pdf](http://www.arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ARB_Criteria_pt3.pdf)), and the proposed schedule of lectures and seminars is derived directly from these criteria, which are common to all equivalent courses in the UK.

It is, however, intended that, within these criteria, the Kent PGDip has the following USPs:

- Exploration of alternative building procurement strategies, reflecting innovative practice (partly based on the staff team's personal experience)
- Emphasis on international practice (based on the proposed staff team's personal experience)

One of the USPs of the Kent PGDip in Architectural Practice is to be its international outlook. The Programme Director has extensive personal experience managing projects and businesses in the UK, France, Poland, Russia and many other countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. The other senior member of the proposed staff team (Frances Forward) manages a design and construction business in Germany and the UK.

### **11 Conditions**

Conditional validation has been recommended for the following reason:

- the school has not responded to action points made previously, or provided a clear reason for not acting on those action points (section 4.11, RIBA Procedures for Validation 2011, second revision May 2014)

The following conditions apply.

- 11.1 The School must address Action Points 11.1, 11.3, 11.6 and 11.7 from the Exploratory RIBA Visiting Board (January 2021).

### **12. Commendations**

The Board made the following commendations:

- 12.1 We commend the School on the appointment of committed, pro-active and rigorous Professional Examiners and External Examiner.

### **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. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 13.1 The Board noted that the Examiner's Guide has been produced since the previous visit. The Board observed that the Examiners and the Course Team have different understandings as to how Module AR896 is assessed. The roles and responsibilities of the Internal Assessors,

Professional Examiners and External Examiner require further clarification and the document updated accordingly.

13.2 The Board observed that the Learning Outcomes noted in the Module Specifications do not align with the Learning Outcomes noted in the Detailed Mapping of Assessment. The School must review the mapping, clarify which learning outcomes are to be met in which module and update the Detailed Mapping of Assessment accordingly. The School must ensure that it is clear where a candidate will meet every Learning Outcome.

13.3 The School must establish clear guidelines for candidates that fail a module(s) and document the process by which work may (or may not) be redeemed through a referral/ deferral / re-sit process. This should be made fully transparent to Students (in the Student's Guide) and Examiners (in the Examiner's Guide).

#### **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 Board advises the School to ensure that all candidates are required to undertake a variety of outputs (e.g. formal and informal communications to clients, contractors and other key parties, file notes, etc.) in the written examination and with a prescribed word-count.

14.2 The Board advises the School to appoint a wider pool of Professional Examiners so as to ensure that each pair of examiners has a manageable workload on each examining day.

#### **15 Delivery of professional criteria**

##### **15.1 Part 3**

The Board confirmed that graduates met the Part 3 professional criteria but refers the School to the condition and the action points.

#### **16 Other information**

##### **16.1 Student numbers**

6 (2021 cohort)

##### **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 next visiting board.**

- Meeting with the head of school course leader
- Meeting with candidates
- Meeting with external and professional examiners