

RIBA 

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board  
to London School of Architecture - 2022**

**Date of visiting board:** 1 & 2 December 2022

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee:** 31 March 2023

- 1 Details of institution hosting courses**  
**The London School of Architecture**  
6 Orsman Road  
London, N1 5RA
- 2 Courses offered for validation**  
Part 2 MArch in Designing Architecture
- 3 Head of School**  
Dr Neal Shasore – Head of School  
Samantha Hardingham – Academic Director
- 4 Awarding body**  
University of Liverpool
- 5 The visiting board**  
Cameron Wilson - Chair  
Athena Moustaka  
Ben Cowd  
Anthony Petrilli  
Jaime Solloso – 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](http://www.architecture.com).
- 7 Proposals of the visiting board**  
On the 31 March 2023, the RIBA Educational Committee confirmed that the following course and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:  
  
Part 2 MArch in Designing Architecture  
  
The next visit to the University of London School of Architecture will take place in 2027.
- 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)

The London School of Architecture was established in 2013 with a clear vision, that people living in cities experience more fulfilled and more sustainable lives. Our mission is to build architectural programmes and learning experiences that are affordable and accessible.

A fast-changing world demands a different kind of architecture school to deliver on these ambitions. Climate emergency, the tragedy of the fire at Grenfell Tower, ever stronger demands for social justice: society and community need responsive forms of built environment practice.

We exist to educate these future spatial leaders to design the innovations society so urgently needs, and we want to ensure that our school is truly representative of the diverse society and city in which it is located. This means we are dedicated to enabling and empowering independent minds not independent means and pursue a focused campaign to provide alternative routes for architecture.

We offer a two-year MArch in Designing Architecture based at our East London studio. Our progressive and practical educational model offers teaching and learning that is practice embedded and practice oriented. We unite a world-beating network of professional practitioners and academics (the first of its kind in London), alongside a design-focused curriculum. This means that our graduates move seamlessly into employment after the conclusion of the programme. To study at the LSA is not only to gain a qualification, but to be an agent of change.

We ask our students three essential questions:

- What change do you want to see in the world?
- How does your architecture contribute to that change?
- Who do you want to be as a designer?

Our innovative MArch/Part 2 programme supports students to develop and articulate their own answers. An emphasis on social innovation is backed up with a rigorous and methodical approach to refining design skills and process, and the application of critical and analytical thinking.

Students establish a rich and diverse Community of Practice during their period of study to develop and test their thesis project, supported by our practice-based Faculty.

We explore the production of the built environment under 'real life' conditions – thesis projects revolve around a built proposition, working inventively and responsibly with existing conditions, turning to the creation of new buildings when needed. We seek poetry and meaning through a radical realism. This means a determined and unapologetic focus on diverse forms of practice and the immediate and urgent demands of the development of the city.

### **The LSA Unites Academia and Practice**

Our programme is among the first in the UK to embrace the 'earn while you learn' model; all

students are obliged to undertake a 3-day-a-week placement in a RIBA Chartered Practice in their first year of study alongside taught modules in school. Students earn at least the London Living Wage in their first year of study, mitigating the cost of fees. Our highly engaged Practice Network of industry partners, now over two hundred strong, spans major international practices working on largescale commercial projects and small/micro-practices with a focus on social value and community engagement. Members are frequent visitors to the studio as tutors and faculty, guest reviewers and workshop participants. The Practice Network advises on the

development of our academic offering and helps devise a programme of practice-related events and content to augment our core academic programme. They ensure our graduates are prepared for the realities of contemporary practice.

Our modules are designed to encourage critical reflection on contemporary practice and professionalism, and to replicate – as far as possible – the conditions of the industry. Some are wholly unique to the school:

- Design Think Tanks – teams of students collaborate with leading practices to tackle design challenges facing the contemporary and future city. The teams undertake an applied research project and function like a small practice for 12 weeks.
- Critical Practice – a series of highly animated lectures, seminars and workshops connect the ethical responsibilities of the architect to the fundamental challenges faced by humanity and the planet. Each student makes a Critical Practice Manual which codifies a bold, rigorous investigation into contemporary practice through a study of their placement office. The Critical Practice Manifesto frames a student's own ambitions for architectural action.
- Design Cities – introduces students to the systems and structures that govern how the city – London – has developed. The module is pursued purely through drawing as a means to translate and communicate a wide range of information.
- Design Speculation, Thesis and Synthesis is timetabled alongside Design History and Design Tectonics – providing a three-stage structure to develop an individual thesis project in the final – what we call the 'proto-practice' – year. Students set out the principles for how they see their future practice taking shape, drawing together contextual, historical, and technical project threads to deliver an architectural proposal to a high level of resolution.

### **The LSA uses the City as Campus**

- London is our campus and our muse; students are encouraged to use the learning resources and facilities of the city in which they study, have access to all online teaching resources available through our academic partner, and even more expansively the exceptional resource of professional expertise through a connected Practice Network

- Our 'Part 4' offer aims at delivering hands-on, experiential courses for post-professionals to maintain the mandatory core competencies required for registration. Materials developed for these courses are shared with our Part 2 students.

- Key modules focus on different boroughs of London each year; we forge close links with local authorities and agencies to help link research projects and design outputs

- We have an ambitious outreach and access programme, our 'Part 0' offer, including taster programmes for 13–19-year-olds from schools local to the LSA, focussing on knowledge and skills across the production of the built environment. Our MArch students assist in running these programmes.

### **We Demand an Architecture that Serves Humanity and the Planet**

The LSA is a mission and a critique; a mission to change architectural and built environment education to meet the demands of climate crisis and inequality through a more diverse industry, and a critique of where we see British architectural education failing to meet those demands. In order to meet these major challenges, we are guided by the following ideas and explorative themes in our teaching, learning and research. As a community we will:

### **Cultivate Built Environment Fellowship:**

Our school will foster a common educational framework across design, development and construction focussing on collaboration, respect, inter- and multi-disciplinary knowledge for a safe, sustainable, and socially valuable/inclusive built environment.

**Promote Meaningful Municipalism:**

Our school will cultivate and celebrate real and long-term engagement with communities, local authorities, and civil society, connecting with like-minded partners who align design with new forms of political action and intervention.

**Seek to Decolonise, Decarbonise, and Destandardise design:**

Our school will develop an ambitious pedagogy that explores different ways of understanding design and construction, and world-making more broadly, that seeks to decarbonise through sustainable and regenerative design, and which acknowledges and enables a built environment for all.

The London School of Architecture was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) incorporated on 10 December 2014 and registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales on 13 January 2015. Our degrees are awarded by our academic partner, the University of Liverpool.

**10 Commendations**

**10.1** The Board commends the School in the initiation and development of the City as Campus through the LSA Practice Network which is vital to the uniqueness of the offering and the Board encourages the School to continue to develop the Network as a priority.

**10.2** The Board commends the enthusiasm, drive and commitment of the trustees, staff, and students.

**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 Board is aware of the mapping of the graduate attributes and criteria appropriate to Part 2 level and requests for the mid-term review document clarification on course structure with respect to 50% of all assessed work defined as an integrated design project (2021 Validation procedures p.20)

**12.2** The School should further develop the City Campus mapping and managing of practice facilities as a matter of priority.

**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 School should continue to develop the vision of the City as Campus through the LSA Practice Network City and encourages the pedagogical and professional dialogue that will inform the School position for the future.
- 13.2 The School should enhance the external examination process to permit discussion between students and external examiners independent of the School academics.
- 13.3 The School should consider developing a rubric methodology to allow for clear connection of feedback, RIBA criteria and learning outcomes.
- 13.4 The School should implement a system for each and every student to evidence a consistent means of providing a comprehensive portfolio addressing all RIBA criteria.

**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 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MArch in Designing Architecture.

**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 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the MArch in Designing Architecture.

**16 Other information**

**16.1 Student numbers (from the School)**

**MArch (Part 2):** 129

**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 at the next full visiting board.**

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