

## **RIBA exploratory board to the University of Lancaster**

**Date of visiting board:** 25 February 2022  
**Confirmed by the RIBA:** 1 June 2022

**1 Details of institution hosting course**

University Lancaster  
 Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA)  
 The LICA Building Lancaster  
 United Kingdom  
 LA1 4YW

**2 Professor of Architecture and Head of the School of Architecture**

Professor Ruth Dalton  
 Des Fagan

**3 Course offered for candidate course status**

Bachelor of Arts with Honours Architecture, Part 1 BArch

**4 Awarding body**

Lancaster University

**5 The visiting board**

Luke Murray (Chair)  
 Lindesay Dawe  
 Lucia Medina  
 Jayesha Fernando, 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 September 2011, and effective from September 2021); this document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

The standard RIBA exploratory board timetable was modified exceptionally to allow all the visiting board to take place online.

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

All timetabled events took place as for a physical exploratory board but remotely.

**7 Recommendation of the Exploratory Board**

The Board was invited by the University of Lancaster to consider its Bachelor of Architecture BArch for candidate course status for Part 1.

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.

On 1 June 2022 the RIBA confirmed that Candidate Course Status for Part 1 be awarded to the following course:

**Bachelor of Arts of with Honours in Architecture, BArch (Part 1)**

A full visiting board to consider the programme for RIBA Part 1 validation will take place when the first cohort graduates on a date to be agreed between the RIBA and the School.

**8 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

**9 Academic position statement (written by the school)**

*Lancaster University's performance across a range of creative arts disciplines, in tandem with the University TEF gold and recent 2020 Times International University of the Year achievement, provides an excellent foundation from which to build our new School of Architecture. Our objective is to explore architectural practice through experimentation and world-leading research. To achieve this, three key areas of investigation; Digital Crafts, Future Practice and the Climate Emergency are tested through the development of strong practice relationships to inform live projects and briefs. Students are embedded in a cross-disciplinary community of professors, researchers and architects, collectively engaged in the pursuit of architectural exploration. Our students are taught by research-led staff, including lecturers in Participatory Architecture, Future Living, Computational Design, Urban Futures and Responsive Architecture; all of whom contribute to the teaching of a community of students, engaged in the practice of architecture.*

*We strive to provide an environment which is fully conducive to this exploration: our unique location adjacent to a small wood, in a self-contained campus on the edge of the Lake District World Heritage site provides an excellent locus from which to investigate global issues. Our areas of key interest are framed from this unique position outside looking in to the post-industrial sprawl that characterises the modern city.*

**Digital Crafts**

*We examine and rediscover Digital Craft through the exploration of historical means of building and ornamentation; re-framing craft through the lens of digitisation, automation and mechanisation to uncover new methodologies of building. The vernacular of the Lake District delivers this distinct context – a region famed for its Arts and Crafts housing, the home of Ruskin. The Grade II Listed Building that we inhabit - Bailrigg House - provides an excellent base from which to experiment and explore ornamentation and craftsmanship; students are encouraged to appraise and augment the house through project work that examines how the Arts and Crafts movement might be reframed in our digital age (ARCH203 / Summer Craft School).*

**Future Practice**

*Issues including future cities and rapid urbanisation, changing societal and family structures and patterns of working, new materials and accelerating digitalisation necessitate a new kind of architectural professional, equipped to address such challenges. We challenge our students to examine the nature of the profession and the world of work into which they will emerge. Our student's integration into the world of practice and future practice research is augmented by the series of ARCHI Extra Lectures delivered by practicing architects and researchers which run in parallel with studio sessions. An additional series of lectures (TEA Talks) compliment this lecture series by directly addressing the School's three key areas of investigation. At the conclusion of their studies, students are encouraged to produce their own personal manifesto (ARCH304) defining and developing their approach to specialisation in a field.*

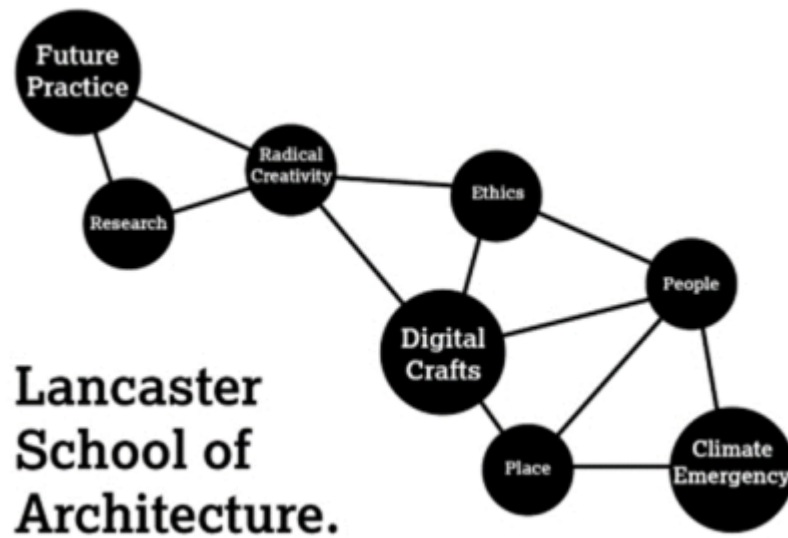
*To complement this exploration in practice, we are establishing a strong and growing network of practical experience – second year students are offered a placement in a local architectural practice through the Student Mentoring Scheme which provides experience and opportunity for ongoing employment. We look to minimise the perceived distributed geographic location of practices in our region through the exploitation of digital means of communication, meetings and exchange; embracing the future of collaborative digital practice (YR2 Practice Mentoring / Practice Exhibitions)*

**Climate Emergency**

*Climate change is seamlessly integrated into everything we teach: we strive for it to become normalised so as to be part of our everyday conversation in studio. Carbon expenditure in the lifetime of a building is introduced early in first year (ARCH103) through carbon calculations that explore the impact of alternative material specification. This conversation is continued across modules and in design studio vertically to inform sustainable design thinking from the point of design inception. Students are challenged to evaluate their projects in relation to Sustainable Outcomes to appraise their design approach in relation to specification and lifecycle (ARCH203).*

*Inherent within the testing of this theme is the vast array of resources available to students at our doorstep; the Lancaster Environmental Centre, the Lancaster Health Innovation campus, the second Eden Project in Morecambe and the new Bailrigg Garden Village; a sustainable community being built on our doorstep. The integration of staff research and live project student interaction in the development of these local projects is central to our aspiration as a key facilitator of sustainable design thinking in Lancashire.*

*Finally, these areas of focus are structured within a constellation of research, radical creativity, ethics, people and place – vehicles that enables us to contextualise and explore our themes within the school. Our aspiration is to become global leaders for design thinking and practice in the areas of Digital Craft, Future Practice and the Climate Emergency. Fundamental to achieving this aspiration is through our collaborative community of students, researchers and practitioners collectively engaged in the pursuit of exploration*



**10 Commendations**

- 10.1 The Board commends the support provided to the students during the pandemic by all Architecture staff and the inclusive approach to ensure access to resources and equipment continued students' learning experiences.
- 10.2 The Board commends the energy, collegiality, and commitment of the Architecture staff and the clear focus they bring to establishing the course.

**11 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.

- 11.1 The School should review the mapping document against the module briefs and learning outcomes to ensure that they are accurately mapped against the RIBA Themes and Values of Architectural Education at all levels of the course.
- 11.2 The position of Architecture within the Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts should be formalised in terms of strategic and operational planning within the University. Ambitions for new, trans-disciplinary practice, in the Architecture course will be dependent on new synergies within LICA.
- 11.3 The School should consolidate an adequate estates and resource strategy that ensures every student has dedicated studio space and enables peer learning across all years of the undergraduate 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 School should consider the educational benefits of architectural field trips, both national and international, to support greater experiential and radical learning environments.
- 12.2 The Board recommend the school consider how to utilise the existing workshop facilities to support students' creative exploration and making, whilst reviewing the opportunities for specialist equipment associated with the three areas of investigation.
- 12.3 The board recommend the course team strengthen its connections with local practice and contextual agendas, to further articulate the 'decentralised' approach within the School.
- 12.4 The Board recommend the delivery of technology modules to be more clearly integrated with design modules across the undergraduate course to ensure students are fully engaged with climate emergency debates.
- 12.5 The Board recommend continuing support for staff in developing new teaching practices, with individuals encouraged to set their own plans.
- 12.6 The school should reflect upon the opportunities that a transgressive educational agenda affords, and how staff can encourage and embed these within student-led activities.

**13 Delivery of graduate attributes**

The Board confirmed that the BArch programme demonstrated the potential to meet the Part 1 graduate attributes if developed in the way anticipated.

**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.

The Board made no further comments.

**15 Other information**

**15.1 Student numbers**

BArch - 69

**15.2 Documentation provided**

The school provided all documentation as required by the RIBA Validation Procedures.

**16 Notes of meetings**

**Copies of the minutes taken from the following meetings 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 the Vice Chancellor
- Meeting with the Head of School and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with staff