

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Full Report of the RIBA visiting board
to Leeds Beckett University**

The Leeds School of Architecture
The Leeds School of Art

Date of visiting board: 11/12 November 2021
Confirmed by RIBA: 28 September 2022

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**
 The Leeds School of Architecture
 The Leeds School of Art
 Leeds Beckett University, room B501, Broadcasting Place
 Woodhouse Lane, City Campus, Leeds LS2 9EN
- 2 Head of Architecture**
 Sarah Mills
- 3 Course/s offered for revalidation**
 BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
 Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2
 Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Practice, Part 3
 Postgraduate Certificate in Architectural Professional Practice
 (Apprenticeship route) Level 7
- 4 Course leader/s**
 Dr Claire Hannibal BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
 George Epolito MArch, Part 2
 Simon Warren, PG Dip, Part 3
- 5 Awarding body**
 Leeds Beckett University
- 6 The visiting board**
 Professor Karim Hadjri - Chair
 Steve McIntyre
 Aisling Rusk
 Dr Gul Kacmaz Erk
 Jayesha Fernando, RIBA validation manager, was 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); this document is available at www.architecture.com.
- 8 Proposals of the visiting board**
 On 28 September 2022 RIBA confirmed that the following courses and qualifications were unconditionally revalidated.

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2
Postgraduate Diploma Architectural Professional Practice, Part 3
Postgraduate Certificate in Architectural Professional Practice
(Apprenticeship route) Level 7

The next visiting board will take place in 2026
- 9 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 institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department.

10 Academic position statement (written by the School)

The Leeds School of Architecture (LSA) is one of five subject areas within the Leeds School of Arts at Leeds Beckett University; the other subject areas are Film, Music and Performing Arts, Creative Technologies and Art and Design. This context provides an ideal setting to support our critical, collaborative and interdisciplinary processes, and to lead debates about emerging forms of practice and innovative research.

LSA's expanding pedagogical terrain comprises the following programmes: BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1; Master of Architecture, Part 2; PG Dip Architectural Professional Practice and Postgraduate Certificate in Architectural Professional Practice, Part 3; the Architecture Degree Apprenticeship (launched in 2021); PhD in Architecture, Urban Design, Interiors and Landscape, as well as courses in Interior Architecture (BA), Urban Design (MA), and Landscape Architecture (BA, MA, PG Dip). There are dynamic engagements between staff and students through our interdisciplinary studio culture facilitated by the exceptional provision at Broadcasting Place and the wider resources across the School of Arts, and with high levels of pastoral and mutual support. Intertwined with these courses are the Open Lecture series with external guest speakers curated between staff and students, public exhibitions, termly symposia, annual international conferences, exchanges (ERASMUS and British Council Venice Biennale Fellowship) and collaborations with an extensive range of professional practices and institutions locally and worldwide, which empower students and staff to develop. Recent successes and exceptional outcomes include: winning entries in the Edmund N. Bacon International Design Awards 2018/19 and 2019/20 with students presenting their winning design proposals at Philadelphia University, USA. The New Wortley Community Centre, developed by RIBA Chartered Architecture Consultancy Project Office and LSA students, was named as one of the UK's 100 best breakthroughs by MadeAtUni for its significant impact on people's everyday lives. In 2018/19, MArch students developed proposals for seal and bird hides on a North East nature reserve for BMMJV-working on behalf of the Environment Agency, RSPB and Teesside Environmental Trust, which were subsequently shortlisted for the North East RIBA Awards and made the RIBA MacEwen Award 2020 long list. In 2019, Mumbai research and project work was exhibited in the Japanese Pavilion, Venice Biennale, and the exhibition was curated by Momoyo Kajima from Atelier Bow-Wow together with Laurent Stalder and Yu Iseki. In 2020 Simon Feather was a RSA Student Award winner and joint winner of the RIBA Boyd Auger Scholarship for his project Re-'Forested, and Howard Kent was commissioned by Leeds Art Gallery to

build an installation which was exhibited in their 'New Natures Exhibition' 2020.

These projects, associated outputs and impact case studies are aligned with five distinct research clusters established in the school: Agency and Live Project Pedagogy; Digital and Material Morphology; Scene, Sequence and Mediated Commons; New Ecologies and Territorial Architectonics and Displacement, Other-ness and Multiplicity. These specific strands of critical and creative enquiries inform the focus of propositional design studios, technological investigations, historical and theoretical frameworks and critical stance in professional practices. The school's diverse and collective outputs, including experimental practices, academic writings, technological innovations, laboratory and field works, live projects, pedagogical research, design and educational processes, are regularly shared and debated in regular school research seminars, connecting to research communities and activities in other subject areas across the university.

Embedded in the school's ethos is the way we continuously question what it means to practice as an architect as well as our determination to test and expand, via our distinct framework of experimental and ethical pedagogy, architecture's possibilities, and responsibilities within societies, across cultural systems and towards the shared environmental and ecological domains. Beyond the conventional understanding of architecture based on building studies, our courses explore the concept of 'architecture as multiplicity', unfolding architecture's intersections with other disciplines and with its mediated, digitised, coded, augmented, and hybridised existences along with the radical potential of new forms of making. The Part 1 and 2 course structures provide opportunities for planned overlapping of teaching with other School programmes and for students to critically reflect on their own academic journey to acknowledge both how they meet the professional criteria and how they position themselves within the wider context of architecture.

In 2020, the Technology Symposium, part of the annual series of school-wide public events, questioned the architects' role in designing future post-pandemic cities under the shadow of irreversible climate breakdown with speakers including: Dr Helene Steiner, Open Cell Co-Founder; Ehab Sayed, Biohm Founder; Prof. Rachel Armstrong, Newcastle University and Michael Pawlyn, Architect & Exploration Architecture Founder. In 2021 the symposium will address the necessary skills and awareness within architectural education to drive an informed design-led response generating an ecologically resilient future, with speakers from Architects Climate Action Network and heads of sustainability in architectural and landscape practices, engineering and planning. The Context Symposium in 2020 took on the theme of 'Practicing Displacement: Modes of Engagement and Representation' which was directly linked to a distinct research cluster within the school. Speakers and keynote included: Prof. Jane Rendell, UCL; Dr. Adam Ramadan, University of Birmingham; Dr. Romola Sanyal, LSE; Dr. Catalina Pollak Williamson, UEL and Dr. Ella Parry-Davies, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. The Professional Practice Symposium in early 2021 invited speakers to discuss future forms of practice, exploring multi- and interdisciplinary modes of professional collaborative practices.

At Part 1, Technology modules introduce Materials and Energy Systems in the first year, Integration in the second year, completing the course with Critical Technology Strategy and a Specialist Technology Study to support the BA3 design project. Architectural Context modules, including architectural history and theory, representation and urban studies support BA studio and the dissertation in BA3, linking to the themes of the school's research clusters. Part 1 includes a short practice placement opportunity for BA2 and 3 students with many local practices who have strong links to the school; in 2021, placements will also be provided as part of Interior and Landscape with possible interdisciplinary opportunities. At BA3 as part of Professional Studies, planning, project management, architecture and landscape students work together to develop an interdisciplinary project. The 'Project Office', a RIBA chartered practice embedded in the school premised on the pedagogical value of an ethical project delivery, have offered further opportunities for students to work on 'live projects' across Parts 1 and 2. The recent restructuring of the Part 1 course credits celebrates research-related specialisms alongside design modules, enabled by multiple opportunities to achieve a number of the criteria via different strands of technology, context and design, as well as to directly engage with wider communities. Alongside strong links with our alumni, Leeds Society of Architects and RIBA Yorkshire provide students with role mentoring opportunities, all of which ensures graduates are ready to make a difference in their careers ahead together with the collegial experience and new skills that are key to architectural work in contemporary practices. Planned course changes are already underway to respond to the new RIBA Validation Framework - Themes and Values for Architectural Education, these include a new Professional Studies module in BA2 which consolidates the current PS1 module in BA3. A new 10 credit module will be introduced in semester two (the BA3 module is 20 credits) with students engaging with issues of 'practice' at an early stage. At Part 2 there is a strong emphasis on the design, with studios developing projects in complex national and international city contexts to challenge the role of architects and architecture. Design studios are supported by specialist workshops and operate via collaborations in interdisciplinary studio settings with students from MA Urban Design and MA Architecture Futures courses. Architectural Context Studies 'Architecture and Urban Design as Multiplicity - from Stasis to Thesis' guides students to establish and develop their research interests, critical analyses, and original arguments in formulating their 'Stasis' in Year 1 as a preparation towards their final 'Thesis' in Year 2. Technology modules benefit from consultancies from advanced practice, including Arups and BuroHappold Engineering.

Our successful Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Practice - Part 3, is a fifteen-month long course with strong pastoral support and a small cohort. The course is structured via four specialist study unit events which include lectures, seminars and workshops on the various topics delivered by specialists from academia, practice, and the construction industry. As the University sets out its new five-year strategic plan including "an aligned, sustainable, connected organisation" and "an excellent diverse, engaged community" we are ideally placed to help deliver these aims in and beyond the university and to affirm the significant and productive role the discipline of architecture can play in shaping our environment. In 20/21, 42.7% of entrants to the Part 1 course and 30.8% of entrants to Part 2 were from low socio-economic groups; in 2018/19, 92.9% of graduates from Part 1, and 100% of

MArch students were in high skilled employment six months after graduation. During the pandemic our adoption of new technologies and increased links with practices and institutions via open events and reviews addressed RIBA's Way Ahead aspirations. A Professional Doctorate in Architecture, which will forge further connections practice, is currently being written. Upon the basis of this multilateral and empowering framework, and in resonance with the principle of university as life and life as architecture, we believe our school community and its wider networks of inspirations and actions will continue to take on the challenge of redefining the role of architects and probing new capabilities of architecture in response to urgent issues of resilience, inclusivity, diversity, care, fairness and innovation confronting our relations to the environments and to one another.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the collegial and supportive environment within the Leeds School of Architecture, and the care and proactive support offered to the student and staff community by the university, particularly during the pandemic.
- 11.2 The board commends the cross disciplinary studio culture and diversity in teaching approaches within the school.
- 11.3 The board commends the high employment rate of its graduates, and encourages the university to continue to develop its degree apprenticeship course.

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

- 13.1 The school must foreground responses to climate emergency in its curriculum and enhance and inform sustainability in technology, environment and design studio teaching content.
- 13.2 The school must further develop its efforts in interdisciplinary work and further its engagement with Leeds Sustainability Institute, The Faculty of the Built Environment, local practices, and local communities to inform its teaching and scholarship.
- 13.3 The school must produce a more comprehensive and succinct mapping of all modules against the ARB & RIBA validation criteria for future validation visits.

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 better articulate its ethos, strengths, and ambition in the academic position statement.
- 14.2 The board advises the school to ensure facilities such as workshops and printing are accessible and affordable for students.
- 14.3 The board advises that the Project Office is further supported by the university and school to ensure its longevity and offer more opportunities to a larger number of students and staff and provide greater benefit to the local community.
- 14.4 The board advises the school to extend its Part 1 teaching of Architectural Context to include pre-C20th history and theory to further enhance the strengths of the school, such as critical thinking, cultural/social links and questioning the role(s) of an architect.
- 14.5 Whilst the board applauds the university's and school's plan to appoint a Chair in Architecture to further develop its research portfolio, the board advises that this is considered a high priority.

15 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), the commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a criterion was particularly positively demonstrated, the commentary is supplied.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers

Course Programme Code	Mode (PT / FT)	Number of Students
Part 1 ARCHA	FT	196
Part 1 ARCHA	PT	4
Part 2 MARCH	FT	26 (incl. 1 Erasmus)
Part 2 MARCH	PT	7 (incl. 1 Erasmus on)
Part 2 (Year 1, Degree Apprenticeship) PARPP	PT	5
Part 3 PROFY	PT	35 (incl. 17 enrolled from Jan 2021, or taking the exam in December 2021)

17 Documentation provided

The school provided all advance documentation in accordance with the validation procedures.

18. Notes of 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 budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff