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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the visiting board  
to the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice  
in Architecture (Part 3)**

**1 Details of institution hosting course/s/examination/s**

RIBA  
21 MANN ISLAND  
LIVERPOOL WATERFRONT  
LIVERPOOL  
L3 1BP

**2 Professional Education Programme Director**

Alison Mackinder

**Part 3 Course Leader**

David Watkins

**3 Courses/examinations offered for validation**

RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part 3)

**4 Awarding body**

Royal Institute of British Architects.

**5 The visiting board**

Ben Cowd – Chair  
Anthony Petrilli

The original third member of the board withdrew due to illness. The RIBA Director of Education and the Professional Education Programme Director agreed that the board could proceed with 2 members.

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, 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 July 2011, and effective from September 2011); this document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

**7 Proposals of the visiting board**

On 28 September 2022 the RIBA confirmed unconditional revalidation of the following:

RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture  
(Part 3)

The next full visiting board 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

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- 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 candidates 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 RIBA Part 3 team)**

The RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture Part 3 Examination is delivered by the RIBA North regional office. Originally founded to progress graduates from the four schools of architecture in the north-west it now has strong links with a range of UK and international schools and delivers professional education to students from across the UK and also internationally. Over the past ten years it has established a strong track record in Hong Kong, Dubai and New York. It has strong links with practice.

The Part 3 course's distinctiveness is due to it being delivered by the profession for the profession under the aegis of the RIBA North regional office supported by the resources of the RIBA and the RIBA Academy. We believe that the profession, as a whole, benefits from the consistent testing of the standards set for the 'gateway' to the profession for their rigour and relevance by the RIBA.

We see current practice as a key professional learning environment. This is informed by the knowledge, experience and insights from the intensive lecture courses delivered by a mix of leading practitioners and academics from the built environment professions and the online support of the RIBA Academy. Students are also supported in the workplace by online study material and online sources of professional knowledge and competence. The students' progression is supported by a network of practitioner PSAs (Professional Studies Advisers) who represent a cross-section of the profession: from recently-qualified architects to experienced senior practitioners who share a common interest in nurturing the architects of tomorrow. We see this as an opportunity to engage with and encourage new practitioner talent to act as mentors to our students, to focus on current issues and contribute to the development of the profession. In response to feedback from practitioner/examiners and continuous internal review as well as the challenges to professional development prompted by the pandemic we have focused on leading students to use the changing workplace to expand their critical thinking skills and reflections on practice and to develop a deeper understanding of the multidisciplinary teams and key stakeholders that shape project delivery. The lecture courses, work-based learning and online support are managed by the professional team embedded in the RIBA North office led by the RIBA Professional Education Programmes Director, the UK Course Leader, (both experienced architects and practitioners) and a dedicated Part 3 administrative team.

In response to the pandemic, the course was the first to transition from face-to face teaching and oral examinations to online delivery and

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assessment. Our April 2020 lecture programme and oral examinations was moved to online delivery. Against the backdrop of the country 'in lockdown' and closed borders the effects of COVID presented logistical challenges for our UK and international students. Students clearly faced immediate challenges and uncertainties in the workplace and in their professional development. Although lacking the normal day-to-day, face-to-face support they proved to be both resilient and conscientious. The feedback on the move online was positive and we are confident that professional standards of assessment were maintained. As conditions nationally and internationally allow, we plan to deliver the course as a 4 mix of the best of online delivery and face-to-face support with the options of online and face-to-face assessment.

The strong reputation of the course and the RIBA, its independence and proximity to practice allows a focused response to the varying professional training demands of practice. For example, the course is part of the Foster + Partners Academy: offering expert support to their students in the workplace who come from a wide range of international backgrounds.

In the future we plan to expand the course delivery. From the original course in Chester the course is delivered in London. We currently offer short courses for international chartered membership and preparation for the ARB Prescribed examinations to provide wider international access to the profession. We plan to meet the international demand for our Part 3 building on the strong reputation and relationship with the RIBA Chapters in Hong Kong, Middle East, China and New York. The Part 3 team are well-placed to offer tailored courses for professionals wishing to register in the UK in the future.

Importantly, the course aims to remain relevant and up-to-date, supporting the key changes in professional competence post-Grenfell and the practical professional challenges to practitioners in response to the Climate Emergency, making professional ethics a key priority in our teaching. The course remains on the cusp of 'current and future practice'. 'Representative practice', the key contemporary issues of architectural design across the spectrum of current practice: the commissioning, design, procurement, regulation, and practice has great potential as a research area that has not been sufficiently resourced or explored. The teaching and examiner team include experts and representatives of current practice and the team wishes to capitalise on this resource to lead and facilitate further study of the challenges of contemporary ethical practice and competence and capturing innovative practise as well as normative practise, potentially strengthening links with our close academic partners.

The course team also sees potential in supporting the further professional development in our graduates. This includes looking beyond the 'gateway' to the profession and preparing newly qualified architects for lifelong learning through strengthening our close links and crossovers with the RIBA Academy's CPD programme and Schools of Architecture to support professional excellence in practice that matches their design talents

**10 Commendations**

- 10.1 The Board commends the dedication of the course leadership team, particularly throughout the national and global expansion.
- 10.2 The Board commends the increasing global outreach, providing an important service to students working internationally.
- 10.3 The Board commends the rapid move to online learning in March 2020, ensuring that the examinations in April 2020 could proceed.
- 10.4 The Board commends the collaboration between the RIBA and the RIBA Academy and the recently acquired access to the CIS Library and CPD, which will enhance the student experience.

**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 RIBA should ensure that the Part 3 Course receives appropriate financial and human resource to:
  - 1. protect its future longevity and sustainability
  - 2. maintain programme and quality of candidate experience particularly as it grows both nationally and internationally.

**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 To address candidate wellbeing and mental health consideration should be given to the use of the planned introduction of the RIBA Compact, which is due to become mandatory for RIBA Chartered Practices in 2023.
- 13.2 If possible, the course team arranges an opportunity for candidates to meet the external examiner to give feedback about the student experience.
- 13.3 The drop-in sessions are a positive development and an important point of contact and feedback for students. The Board advises the course team to consider how this can be expanded further in response to student demand and resourced effectively to cope with the increasing student numbers in the UK and abroad.

**14. Review of work against the Professional Criteria at part 3**

The Board confirmed that all professional criteria for part 3 were met by all graduates of the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture.

**15. Other information**

**15.1 Candidate numbers**

2021: 321 enrolled.

**15.2 Documentation provided**

All documentation as required by the RIBA Procedures for Validation was provided.

**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 the mid-term panel and the next full visiting board.

- Meeting with staff,
- Meeting with the Chair of the RIBA Board
- Meeting with candidates
- Meeting with professional and external examiners