

Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of Dundee

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design

Date of visiting board: 26 & 27 May 2022

Confirmed by the RIBA Education Committee: 18 August 2022

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design
University of Dundee
Matthew Building
13 Perth Road
Dundee
DD1 4HT

2 Courses offered for validation

BA Architecture, Part One
M.Arch, Part Two
Masters in Architecture with Urban Planning, Part Two

3 Head of Architecture and Planning

Cameron Wilson

Programme Leads

Part 1: Carol Robertson
Part 2: Helen O'Connor

4 Awarding body

University of Dundee

5 The visiting board

Paul King - Chair
Doug King – Vice Chair
Olive White
Toby Blackman

In attendance:

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – validation manager

6 Procedures and criteria for the online 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.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

On 18 August 2022 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the following courses:

Bachelor of Arts in Architecture, Part One
MArch, Part Two
Masters in Architecture with Urban Planning, Part Two

The next visit to the University of Dundee 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)

Architecture at the University of Dundee is vital in supporting the university's core purpose to transform lives globally and locally, building on creative connections with partners in our region, nationally and internationally, professional bodies and external companies/organisations who share our values to influence the world around us. In 2021, following a realignment of the Schools across the University of Dundee, the disciplines of Architecture and Urban Planning re-joined the School, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design (DJCAD).

This has allowed us to continue to maintain our links across the university and renew synergies and seek new collaborations with the creative disciplines of DJCAD. The recognition of Dundee as the UK's only UNESCO City of Design, the opening in 2018 of V&A Dundee, the development of the Tay waterfront and the proposed Eden Project shows that this small city continues to transform and provide an excellent location for architecture students to study. Architecture will be a significant contributor to the strategy within the environment of DJCAD to 'foster innovative and visionary thinkers' (*DJCAD Strategy 2021*).

Architecture and Urban Planning

Now residing within the community of DJCAD we are in a prime position to enhance our shared vision of utilising the creative studio as a place for "thinking through making". We pride ourselves in providing for our students and staff a creative studio environment and supportive studio culture which encourages students to collaborate, engaging with interdisciplinarity by connecting beyond the discipline, and beyond the institution through civic engagement. Our close collaboration with Urban Planning allows us to engage in a holistic way in understanding the complex overlapping networks which create an urban environment. Our graduates can become agents for positive change.

We continue to position studio practice at the heart of our architecture curriculum with lecture courses taught in parallel with studio projects in all modules, aiding the students in enhancing, investigating, and evidencing their developing understanding and knowledge. We aim to provide students with sufficient time and space to speculate, and to engage students with a steady transition rising in complexity and richness of ideas throughout their five years of study.

At Part 1 we urge students to engage with the contemporary global and local challenges in rural and urban settings and to introduce consideration of issues of sustainability, climate crisis and environmentally responsive architecture. We introduce students to various means of drawn and modelled methods of

iteration, investigations of retrofit, development of digital and physical modelling, including introduction of parametric design and short collaborative exercises such as “BTM” (Building Through Making) charettes with each informing and aiding the final integrated project of the year. At the conclusion of Part 1 we expect students to be evolving as independent architectural thinkers.

Part 2 stimulates new challenges and encourages aspirational thinking across the final years of academic study. Year 4 and 5 are viewed as a holistic learning experience with Year 4 modules addressing many of the Part 2 criteria points with the intention of liberating the final year of study for more flexible opportunities for intellectual interpretation and investigation within each of the Units. Part 2 is designed to shape our graduates as independent critical thinkers positioning themselves in a complex, evolving professional landscape, establishing the environment of the studio as a place to evolve methods of research and open other possibilities for interdisciplinary study.

The development in recent years of semi-autonomous ‘Studios’ within Year 4 has asked students to begin from the position that ‘the starting point of design is the proposition that things could be otherwise’ (Brenner, 2013). This year included finding alternatives to cities as tools for capital accumulation; responding to rising sea levels in vulnerable and historically significant communities; reconsidering the balance between development for ourselves and the needs of other living creatures; the equitable, inclusive and compassionate city; and the relationship between historic city cores and the cities that contain them. In parallel Design Research Units in Year 4 encourage students to develop their theoretical investigations via ‘Thinking Machines’ which assists their conceptual understanding and enhances their studio practice, prefacing considerations for study in Year 5.

Year 5, via the MArch and MArch with UP studios, enables our students to engage directly academic research being conducted in the School. Studios are structured around the research preoccupations of academic staff, considering a breadth of approaches to meeting contemporary urban challenges through critical and creative spatial practice. Each of the Studios and Units maintain links to other disciplines, industry and professionals out-with the University appropriate to their focus and forms of research.

Research and Scholarly Activity

Architecture and Urban Planning research has a small but growing group of researchers with diverse interests in urban processes including, sustainable change and community action, intellectual frameworks and intellectual history, social and political problems of the city, urban systems, housing, cities and politics. Pedagogy has also developed as an area of research since our previous RIBA review. Our research along with scholarly interests of staff, including part time staff, who are not on research contracts, is critical in ensuring the ongoing dialogue within studio continues to be relevant for our students’ experience.

Inclusion now within DJCAD is allowing us to develop further our research interests and explore alignments within DJCADs 4 research centres at the same time as we maintain our links with other schools and collaborate across the university.

Wider Context and the Future

Our MArch with Urban Planning programme is now embedded within the culture of our architecture studios, as is our collaborative non-accredited programme with Wuhan University. This academic year initiated a Structural Engineering with Architecture UG degree programme operated by our Engineering school, and we are at early stages of exploring other meaningful collaborations with colleagues across the University, within DJCAD and internationally. At this key moment in our history, we continue to be entrepreneurial as we evolve, nurture and grow our cross disciplinary and collaborative opportunities for the University, our staff and our students and to collectively embrace the increasingly complex challenges for our future professions, industries, and societies.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the school for the integration of humanities in year 1 using spatial exploration as a tool for learning.
- 10.2 The Board commends the school for the facilities it offers to students, particularly the analogue and digital workshops, and the way these **facilities** inform the pedagogy and student work.
- 10.3 The Board commends the school for its engagement with the region and local communities and how this outward looking pedagogy could inform the academic position of the school.

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 Consistent, transparent assessment criteria should be developed across studios, modules and programmes of study. The assessment criteria should be presented and fed back upon in a manner, which creates both points of departure and academic parity.
- 12.2 The staff should be enabled to allocate sufficient time for collegiate deliberations on the academic position and operation of the School.

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 Board advises the School to continue forging links with practice and develop further new links so that the students' experience is inclusive, diverse and relevant to practice.

15 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.

15.1 Part 1

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met.

15.2 Part 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met.

16 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.

16.1 The Board made no further comments.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers (from the School)

343 (across the 5 year integrated programme: Bachelor of Arts in Architecture, Part One, MArch, Part Two & Masters in Architecture with Urban Planning, Part Two

17.2 Documentation provided

The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

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