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Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA Full visiting board to Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) - 2022

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Date of visiting board: 31 October, 1 November 2022
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 20 March 2023

1   Details of institution hosting courses
Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport
(AASTMT)
Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design Department
College of Engineering and Technology, Smart Village, Giza
P.O. Box 12577
Smart Village - B2401

2   Courses offered for validation
Part 1: The first 4 years (full-time) of the BSc in Architectural Engineering and
Environmental Design 5-year course

Courses offered for candidate course status
Part 2: MSc in Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design

3   Head of School
Suzette Aziz Ph.D. Professor

Course Leaders
Part 1 course leaders:
Suzette Aziz and Kareem Nabil (Design studio modules)
Sara Alsaadani (Environmental studies modules)
Nancy Abdelmoneim (Urban design modules)
Mohamed Mosaad (Building technology and execution design modules)
Omar Galal (Computer applications modules)

Part 2 course leaders:
Professor Suzette Aziz
Dr Ayman Wanas

4   Awarding body
The Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport
(AASTMT)

5   The visiting board
Professor Sally Stewart – Chair
Abi Van Hoorebeek
Onur Ozkaya
Jaime Solloso – RIBA – validation manager
Professor Basil Kamel – Regional Representative

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 the 20 March 2023, the RIBA Educational Committee confirmed that the following course and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

Part 1: The first 4 years (full-time) of the BSc in Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design

On the 20 March 2023, the RIBA Educational Committee confirmed that the following course and qualifications are given candidate course status:

Part 2: MSc in Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design

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)

<u>Introduction and vision</u>:
At Smart Village, both our undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design are based on the same curriculum offered by that of our sister AASTMT schools across Egypt. However, we remain unique in our interpretation of the curriculum through an ethos of regarding the built environment as a lens to develop students' understandings of local and regional issues, under the umbrella of 'community engagement, conservation and revival.' In parallel, we have also been exploring newer, unchartered territories; covering ambitious grounds afforded by recent global events and allowing opportunities for more speculative modes of inquiry across all years of study. By a merger of both positions, we aim at producing graduates who are cognizant of locally situated knowledge in a larger, fast-developing global realm, and who will therefore be able to contribute to the country's sustainable development goals as part of Egypt's 2030 vision.

<u>Areas of Activity</u>:
Our curriculum is centred around design problem-solving, and therefore features a distinct stream of design-studio modules, during which students are exposed to a variety of project typologies. Our curriculum additionally features parallel streams of building technology, environmental studies, and construction modules. Students are also offered electives in a diverse range of areas, including but not limited to art and artistic appreciation, computer software, rendering and applications, urban practice and infrastructure and behavioural aspects in architectural and urban design. Students often work individually and are occasionally assigned group projects to build confidence in teamwork and collaboration.

Features of Distinction

Design studio projects:

Our design studios have developed to address both physical issues related to the Egyptian locality and the region, as well as more speculative modes of questioning (e.g., growing impacts of virtual landscapes on building functions and adaptability). Thus, architectural design is envisaged as a vehicle, through which pre-defined ontological knowledge may be critically queried. The use of narratives in architectural design is one method by which such exploratory approaches are enabled and supported. As evidence of our students' distinction in architectural design, multiple students and graduates of the department have won gold and silver awards, and honourable mentions, in the last four editions of Cairo Design Awards (CDA).

Representation techniques:

Students experiment with a range of representation media to explore, develop and represent their solutions. This includes freehand sketching and technical drawing using both analogue and digital means. We also pride ourselves on a strong culture of model-making to accompany the development of design ideas. We have lately been taking greater steps toward developing students' digital aptitude and rendering techniques by offering a greater number of elective modules in a diverse range of software packages.

High calibre faculty:

We are fortunate to attract high-calibre faculty, several of whom have returned from their postgraduate studies abroad. The majority is situated within a relatively young age-bracket (< 40 years). Some practice architecture professionally and/or participate in both national and international competitions. This means that our staff body remains up to date with all that is state-of-the-art, while reflects on students by linking academia with industry. We also recruit part-time staff from governmental and private institutions, offering knowledge from various schools of thought and wider professional trajectories.

Collegiate teaching and learning environment:

Through highly selective recruitment of staff, we have succeeded in nourishing a warm, collegiate and amicable learning environment on campus, to the extent that words like 'family' are often used to describe the atmosphere of the departments and dynamics within. This positive environment, coupled with concentrated staff-student ratios (ranging between 1:7-1:10) reflects strongly on students and fosters an encouraging milieu for knowledge exchange, interaction and collaboration to occur.

Off-campus activities:

A strong tradition of field trips exists, as site visits are an integral feature of design-studio teaching. Lately, we have engendered out off-campus activities to include internships and numerous opportunities for international student mobility through summer and winter schools.

Visiting Critics and Departments' Activities:

We routinely seek expertise of professionals and academics from outside the department through participation as jury panellists and visiting lecturers, updating students with recent developments in their field of study.

Concurrently, we encourage students to display their work at department exhibitions. Onset and conditions of the coronavirus, and online / hybrid modes of teaching that ensued in the subsequent semesters have given us opportunities to expand such departmental activities at an international scale. This is through both staff and student online participation at international levels including juries, competitions and talks.

Aims and outcomes of RIBA I and II award levels:
Aims at RIBA Part I, corresponding to the first four years of our B.Sc. course, is to equip students with fundamental knowledge and skill sets to allow design problem-solving at diverse scales and in response to various conditions. By the end of the first four years, students should be able to develop their design proposals into technical, execution documents responding to market demands. Part II of our course, i.e., the final year of our B.Sc. course coupled with taught modules from the M.Sc. course, aims at guiding students toward chosen routes for technical specialization. Building on fundamental knowledge acquired during the first four years of study, Part II aims at exposing students to more complex projects and architectural knowledge associated with the built environment, such as technical precepts of sustainable and energy-efficient design, while increasing students' sophistication in intellectual inquiry. This is through enhanced critical thinking, holistic analyses and independent research, which constitute a foreground upon which creative problem-solving is undertaken.

Specific Outcomes and Relevance to Professional Practice:
Our course is designed to produce graduates who can satisfy the following job market requirements:
- Setting architectural programs
- Development of design proposals at both architectural and urban scales
- Presenting design proposals in visual, verbal and written formats, using digital and nondigital media.
- Preparation of well-researched and well-written analytical reports
- Selection of construction methods and preparation of associated technical drawings.
- Project management practices.
Our course also emphasizes acquisition of transferrable skills including critical thinking, creative problem-solving, design development, communication and team-working.

10 Commendations

10.1 The Board commends the Department's commitment to explore regional and local issues and to contribute directly to the development of society and the built environment nationally.

10.2 The Board commends the commitment and collegiality of both students and staff.

10.3 The Board commends the Department in the use of teaching assistants to recognise, nurture and provide opportunities to its own programme graduates.

11 Conditions
There are no conditions.

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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 Department should establish student representation for all academic years to provide the formal mechanisms for the discussion of student matters and to support development of the academic programmes.

12.2 The Department should establish a policy for the appointment for both full and part time teaching assistants and teaching staff and agrees on an appropriate training programme and professional development plan for each member of staff.

12.3 The Department should establish a means to identify and plan staff working time to ensure sustainable and structured workloads, and to support staff in their teaching and research and their wellbeing.

12.4 The Department should identify a mechanism for the overall academic leadership and co-ordination of each programme, and to reinforce academic leadership in subject areas.

12.5 The Department should consider how dedicated studio space can be established to provide students with a consistent working base, a connection across year groups and a location for student led activities.

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 Department should ensure that there is clear differentiation between the ambition and expected outputs of students in each programme, and ensure that there is explicit evidence of the distinct graduate attributes at Parts 1 & 2

13.2 The Board encourages the Department to consider how the programme at Part 2 can be developed to support the exploration of "newer uncharted territories" outlined in the academic position statement.

13.3 The Board advises that the Department puts in place a mechanism to ensure and evidence that all students gaining the Part 1 and Part 2 have met the professional criteria and appropriate graduate attributes.

13.4 The Board recognises the Department's ambition for students to integrate and synthesise skills and knowledge gained across different modules and recommends that this agenda is further pursued to support the delivery of more holistic project work.

14 Delivery of graduate attributes

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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 Parts 1 & 2
Please refer to Advice points 13.1 and 13.3.

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

Graduate Criteria for Parts 1 & 2
Please refer to Advice points 13.1 and 13.3.

16   Other information

16.1   Student numbers (from the School)

BA Arch (Part 1): 311
M Arch (Part 2): 153

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 to the next full visiting board

• Meeting with budget holder and course leaders
• Meeting with students
• Meeting with external examiners
• Meeting with senior management team
• Meeting with staff