



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to the Aarhus School of Architecture**

Date of visiting board: 03-04 October 2023

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 02 January 2024

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Aarhus School of Architecture
 Exners Plads 7
 8000 Aarhus
 Denmark

2 Courses offered for validation

Master of Arts in Architecture, RIBA Part 2

3 Head of School

Torben Nielsen	School Rector
Rasmus G. Hansen	Programme Director

4 Awarding body

Aarhus School of Architecture

5 The visiting board

Harbinder Birdi	Chair / Practitioner
Sally Stewart	Academic
Alida Bata	Academic / Practitioner
Sophie Bailey	RIBA Head of Validation

6 Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education

The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this document is available at www.architecture.com.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

On the 02 January 2024 the RIBA confirmed that the following course is unconditionally revalidated:

Master of Arts in Architecture, RIBA Part 2

The next visit to the Aarhus School of Architecture will take place in 2028.

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)

The Aarhus School of Architecture is responding to a number of both internal and external challenges these years - challenges affecting our Academic Position;

We are currently seeing a transformation of the architectural profession's approach to sustainability. Our society needs strong, innovative, and culturally rooted responses to the challenges we face. This transformation requires new skills and new knowledge.

Aarhus School of Architecture has focused its research on sustainability, the green transition, and sustainable architecture and habitation in urban and peripheral areas. This concerns among other aspects, climate adaptation, cultural heritage, urban development, materials, digital fabrication, social sustainability, and Nordic sustainable architecture.

All of these areas of research have strong external connections to architectural practice and other academic disciplines. However, in order to achieve the aim of effect on society, we need to increase the volume and further strengthen external relations. Robust, long-term sustainable solutions within architecture and urban planning require cross-disciplinary research partnerships to create new horizons for the way we manage and develop our built environment.

We, consequently, aim to focus on research leadership, a skill that is much in demand in academic and professional environments, and which may help increase external research funding in the coming years in the areas mentioned. Continuing to conceive partnerships in a long-term strategic perspective; a perspective that, apart from quality and validity, should aim for increased professional impact of research areas at the societal level, will also be an important part of the strategic position of the School.

In a wider context of the combined skills and competencies delivered by the research and educational programs, scholars and students who graduate from Aarhus School of Architecture must be equipped to contribute to the green transition with proposals for how the nation could live and thrive; a nation where it is possible to live a meaningful life, today and in the future.

Aarhus School of Architecture will continue to offer research-based education with a fundamentally sustainable approach to architecture, crucial to enabling the architects of tomorrow to contribute actively and creatively to the green transition.

For individuals seeking the profession of Architecture, the Aarhus School of Architecture delivers an education that also reflects the ever-changing societal requirements by offering a program open to all qualified students regardless of personal and cultural traits and preferences. This is achieved in the dialectic dialogue between the School, staff, and students.

The master's program in architecture is a 2-year specialization program that continues to build on the bachelor's program in architecture. The education is structured around the architectural subject's artistic and scientific theories, methods, and forms of practice.

The aim of the education is to train candidates who, as architects, master both scientific analysis and artistic experimentation and who manage to translate complex architectural issues into solutions and statements that relate meaningfully to historical and contemporary conditions. The education qualifies the candidates for employment as architects in Denmark and internationally. Thus, the basic structure of the bachelor's education is built on, and the students must demonstrate knowledge and skills at a higher level of abstraction.

Danish democracy is often seen as a way of life and as a form of government. It is an expression of a basic attitude to life that requires respect for other people's opinions. Therefore, our democracy is affected by the way we talk about it and the way we behave in our common society. This applies to the whole school. The democratic institutions particularly demand respect for the idea of legal certainty, and rest on our ability to create an inclusive framework for all students and employees, via laws, participation, and influence. This democratic spirit characterizes Danish society, and is one we believe is a valuable aspect of Danish architecture education.

Therefore, considerable resources are invested in the work to strengthen inclusion and wellbeing among the school's students and staff. For this purpose, a Well-being Council, a Committee for Inclusion and a Didactic laboratory have been set up;

The Well-Being Council is a dedicated forum at the Aarhus School of Architecture that brings together and structures the debate on student well-being. To set a framework for the treatment of any well-being challenges in the study environment and to maintain the dialogue on possible solutions to the challenges. To create visibility about the analyses, debates, and initiatives that are implemented to improve well-being. The Well-being Council monitors previous and new initiatives and evaluates their importance and effect on the student environment.

The purpose of the Committee on Gender Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity is to provide a dedicated forum at the Aarhus School of Architecture for initiatives, debates, and issues related to gender equality, inclusion, and diversity, allowing as many different voices as possible to be heard, regardless of gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, bodily-related identity, and physical and mental barriers.

The Committee on Gender Equality is intended to promote a constructive dialogue supporting developments across the school on issues relating to gender equality, inclusion, and diversity. Raising the profile of data, analyses, and actions undertaken to promote an inclusive workplace that prioritizes diversity and equal treatment, and finally, be a consultative body for the school's management concerning gender equality, inclusion, and diversity, so they can be considered by relevant bodies and the relevant responsible people.

The Didactic Laboratory is a physical and digital space where teachers and researchers develop the framework for learning and well-being, as we recognize well-being as a basis for learning, a prerequisite of the ability to absorb new knowledge and, in particular, the courage to immerse into

something unknown, which is fundamental to our form of architectural education.

Our future strategic collaboration therefore contains elements that seek to frame education and research in relation to the long-term challenges of the outside world. On a concrete, personal level, the challenge is to create optimal conditions for the individual – the student and the school's staff.

10 Commendations

- 10.1** The board commends the school in the support provided for the programme through its physical studios, workshop facilities and technical support and the opportunities provided through engagement with practitioners and other relevant experts.
- 10.2** The board commends the research driven approach of the school demonstrated in the integration of research into design studios, as well as the shared enthusiasm for research agendas initiated by tutors and developed by students.
- 10.3** The board commends the collegiate nature of the student body, and their awareness of challenges within the built environment context, notably sustainability and the innovative use of low-carbon and natural materials.

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 school must provide complete academic portfolios containing the full range of students' achievements available to the RIBA Visiting Board. An academic portfolio contains all assignments submitted for assessment by a student in modules where the RIBA Graduate Attributes and Themes and Values are to be met. The work contained should map directly to the work submitted for in the School's assessment processes.
- 12.2** The school must provide an exhibition of work for each level of the course expressing the programme structure, the academic/pedagogical position of the school and the aims and objectives of each studio.
- 12.3** The school must provide a succinct mapping document to all future RIBA visiting boards, explaining where each Graduate Attribute is delivered (in part or in full) and assessed (in part or in full) across the programme.
- 12.4** As per action point 13.1 of the 2015 RIBA visiting board, the school should ensure that the course structure allows all students to demonstrate the ability to generate complex design proposals showing understanding of current

architectural issues, originality in the application of subject knowledge and, where appropriate, to test new hypotheses and speculations.

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 use their intended review of the curriculum to consider where areas of knowledge and skill should be explored through explicit and discrete courses, or where these are synthesised within studio design work.

13.2 The board encourages the school to consider how continuity can be assured across the four semesters of a studio, while offering formalized/embedded opportunities for debate and dialogue between studios.

13.3 The board recommends that the school further leverages the opportunities to engage with allied disciplines such as the School of Engineering within Aarhus University, to benefit from the interdisciplinary skills and expertise.

14 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.

Graduate Attributes for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Master of Arts in Architecture.

15 Review of work against Themes and Values

It should be noted that where the visiting board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a T&V were clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a T&V was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

Themes and Values for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the Master of Arts in Architecture.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

Master of Arts in Architecture: 251

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.

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Students
- Head of Institution
- External examiners
- Staff