

Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of Brighton

Date of visiting board: 10 and 11 November 2022
Confirmed by RIBA: 18 May 2023

1 Details of institution hosting courses

School of Architecture, Technology and Engineering
University of Brighton
Mithras House
Lewes Rd
Brighton BN2 4AT

2 Courses offered for validation

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2
Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Practice, and Law in Architecture,
Part 3

3 Co-subject leads for Architecture

Jeff Turko
Tom Ainsworth
Luis Diaz

Course Leaders

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1 – Luis Diaz
Master of Architecture, MArch Part 2 – Jeff Turko
Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Practice, and Law in Architecture,
Part 3 – Nick Hayhurst

4 Awarding body

University of Brighton

5 The visiting board

Professor Sally Stewart – Chair
Jack Dunne – Vice Chair
Felicity Atekpe
Victoria Adegoke

In attendance:

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – validation manager

6 Procedures and criteria for the online visit

The visiting board was conducted under the RIBA Procedures for Validation 2021, formally implemented in 2022 (www.architecture.com). The School was able to choose whether to use the 2011 Graduate Attributes and criteria or the 2021 Themes and Values as the process and schools are in transition.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

On 18 May 2023 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the following courses:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2
Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Practice, and Law in Architecture,
Part 3

The next 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
- 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)

In the face of a greater awareness of our collective human impacts on the climate and environment, a refocusing on social justice, the legacy of colonisation, and the experience of a global health crisis that has impacted how we use space and how we now rely more on digital technology as a primary means to communicate and socialise, the question of how we educate future architects has never been more pertinent.

We believe that what makes the architectural education we offer unique is our engagement with the geographical, social, and political context that we occupy between the sea and the South Downs. A position that underpins the many diverse approaches, discussions, and challenges that our students engage with across their academic folios at Parts 1, 2 and 3. Our schools' ambitions are realised through research-centred, hands-on activities and propositions that address global challenges through our local ecologies and communities with a spirit of care.

People remain central to the success of the programme. Our staff pour energy and ideas into the courses and the students understand this, responding in kind. One recent success who exemplifies this approach is Jordan Whitewood-Neal who graduated from the MArch course in 2020: his dissertation "*The Floor is Lava: An Autoethnographic Study of Non-Normative Embodiment and the Entangled Ontologies of Body, Tool and Landscape*" was commended for the RIBA President's Medals dissertation prize.

The research undertaken, both academic and practice-led, is incorporated across the courses.

Examples include;

- Duncan Baker-Brown, author of '*The Re-Use Atlas: a designer's guide towards a circular economy*' is currently the Principal Investigator for two Interreg programmes, considering the viability of local waste flows to be processed into insulation, and in partnership with Rotor DC of Brussels testing ideas associated with the deconstructing late 20th Century/ early 21st Century buildings and re-constructing them. He also leads the Technology and Professional Practices courses in the BA.
- Professor Andre Viljoen and Katrin Bohn continue to be leading figures in researching the relationships between urban space and food-productive urban landscape (CPUL). Much of their research is undertaken and is cross

- disciplinary, bridging the arts, design and planning. Prof Viljoen has also undertaken design studio teaching in the BA and the MArch.
- Dr. Ben Sweeting who teaches on the BA, MArch and MRes courses along with other staff in the subject area led the team that recently hosted the international RSD11 (Relating System Thinking & Design) symposium. This collaborative symposium attracts participants across a varied array of design disciplines.

The architectural practitioners that teach at Brighton also continue to both win awards for their buildings including RIBA, Architect of the Year, AJ retrofit and Civic Trust Awards as well as sit on awards juries: evidence of their esteem in both design and critique of contemporary architectural production. It is wonderful to see so many practices, founded by current and past tutors, listed in the Architecture Foundation's New Architects 4 book that showcases innovative and talented young architectural practices. Our practitioners also contribute to the activities in the region with, for example, Nick Hayhurst in his role as Chair of the Brighton & Hove City Council Design Review Panel.

Our student society has been revitalised after two dormant years during the pandemic. The new society, DASS (Design and Architecture Student Society) includes representatives from the whole subject area. Their mission is to host lectures, creative activities, and social events to help rebuild the studio culture that was significantly diminished following nearly two years of remote delivery. Despite the isolation of the pandemic, we learned from our time delivering teaching online, and intend to retain the more successful elements that will continue to enhance our students' experience. Several series of lectures have been established taking advantage of remote delivery to extend opportunities for attending face to face and online simultaneously, open lectures to all students, and to expand access to world class lecturers. Between 2020 and 2022 our Experimental Design Practices REG (Research Excellence Group) hosted talks from international figures including Perry Kulper, Murray Fraser and Oliver Wilton; our MA in Urban Design invited practitioners and academics from India, Spain, France;

The curriculum we offer in the Part 1 & Part 2 courses is centred around design and supported by specialist teaching in humanities, technology, future practice and, in the later stages of the courses, research methods and practices. The BA and MArch course are full-time with the MArch and Architectural MRes also offering part-time routes. We are currently in the early stages of setting up apprenticeship options, as we are finding that many more students applying to the courses need greater options to continue their education whilst supporting themselves financially. In 2020, an Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) in architecture and design was launched and has begun to offer a preparatory track for students entering Part 1.

The Part 1 course has a long history of engagement with environmental and social issues. Starting at L4, students work with ideas related to urban agriculture, locally sourced materials, and a focus on reworking existing structures. This develops through the L5 and L6 vertical studios where independent briefs have focused on issues ranging from the housing crisis, to investigating sites prone to flooding due to climate change, to projects designed for future deconstruction and reconstruction. The majority of sites are based in Brighton or the local region while reflecting on larger scale issues

around the environment or social justice. Local issues are also addressed through live projects, often with the Brighton and Hove City Council, providing students with real-world contexts and an opportunity to see their work taken back into communities.

This outlook is supported in humanities with lectures covering topics such as gender inequality, issues of race, and exploitation of workers. The technology modules provide students with core skills in understanding the embodied carbon of building materials, the importance of material sources and origins, alongside an emphasis on low carbon alternative modes of heating, ventilation, and lighting. This outlook has developed in consultation with students under the banner of 'The Future We Want.' Coming on the heels of *Architects Declare* and *Architecture Education Declares* we ran a series presentations and workshops aimed at aligning our delivery with students' interests. This approach is fostered by our project-based approach to technology and professional practices where students develop their knowledge using their own studio projects, allowing students to link the different areas of study.

On the Part 2 course, our vertical design studios provide a research-led approach based around staff specialisms, research, professional and scholarly networks. This approach is also applicable through all supporting aspects of this course, with rigorous inquiry fusing innovation, regulation, and social commentary. Year 1 of the MArch provides the setting to initiate a greater independence for the students leading them to establish their own unique positions in the discipline. Year 2 offers a setting for the students to demonstrate their unique disciplinary positions through the setting of the design studios, collaboration driven by inquiry across other post-graduate design courses, and through the development of a research project set by their individual agendas. This approach offers the students an opportunity to investigate and develop their personal architectural agenda, critical position, and design language, preparing them for entry into the profession, further academic enquiry, and allied design disciplines.

Like the BA course, on the MArch course we set a regional geographical territory which allows staff and students to tackle the reality of the local whilst simultaneously addressing global challenges. This too also has benefits to the current students we attract. Field trips are geographically and financially within reach, and with many students local to the region, this allows students to engage with local industries and stakeholders.

Our RIBA Part 3 course completes architectural journey to qualification. The course draws students from around the region with a diverse range of professional experiences and from every type and scale of architectural practice. In particular, we regularly attract candidates who are carrying out their Part 3 later in life after extended periods of time in professional practice or associated disciplines and the course team actively encourages ways to support candidates with non-traditional backgrounds secure their entry into the profession. The course is delivered as a series of lectures, seminars, collaborative workshops, role-play sessions and tutorials and is taught with an emphasis on the practical ethics of practice and the application of professional judgement. Uniquely amongst Part 3 courses, the predominant test of a candidate's judgement is through a 5-week open book examination which

provides a setting for examination that simulates professional life. This Part 3 course is led and delivered by active, award-winning architects and supported by a range of construction-industry professionals.

For those that wish to expand on their academic interests post Part 2 we also offer the Architectural Research MRes. With a focus on building the practice and methods of research in the context of architecture and design, this programme allows students to tailor their studies to their research aspirations and development needs. Completion of the programme provides a foundation for future research, whether through progression to doctoral study or via research careers in industry, professional practice, or the public sector.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the School's focus and engagement in relation to its locality, local and regional communities, societal agendas, and its climatic and geographic conditions.
- 10.2 The Board commends the School's embedding of research practices within programmes, particularly in the MArch as a mean to extend student agency and to provide a wide range of career pathways to graduates.
- 10.3 The Board commends the Part 3 programme in its explicit agenda in providing a platform to support candidates to reach professional qualification, and to provide appropriate teaching input, and programme and examination structure.

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 Board strongly advises that teaching from lectures and seminars is applied within design proposals, particularly at M.Arch level where more freedom is afforded to students. The Board advises that minimum / core requirements are consistently put in place in project briefs to ensure that students do not avoid key areas of criteria such as cost, sustainability, and production information. In addition to this, despite the research-led teaching agenda, an appropriate balance should be found between the research aspects of a project and the design resolution.
- 12.2 The Board strongly advises the School to ensure that technical enquiry, synthesis and resolution are explicitly evidenced within design proposals in the MArch, and in particular the following:

GC1 ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements

GC5.2 the impact of buildings on the environment, and the precepts of sustainable design

GC8.3 the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, components and systems, and the environmental impact of specification choices

GC10.1 critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, constructional systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design

12.3 The Board strongly advises the school should better articulate the distinct characteristics of each programme, and their progressive nature in addressing Parts 1,2 and 3.

12.4 The School should consider how a consistent response to the RIBA Themes and Values is achieved across all programmes, and that staff and students are engaged in the development and dissemination of this.

12.5 Following the experience gained during COVID, the Board strongly recommends the school consider the parameters for late submission and re-assessment, and the tutorial support requirements related to these, to ensure there is a robust and sustainable approach to assessment for all courses

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 consider what model of academic leadership should be put in place to ensure its continued evolution within the new the School of Architecture, Technology and Engineering, and to support the coherent development of the academic programmes.

13.2 The school should consider the opportunities for collaboration across programmes, including peer review, and should consider meaningful points of contact that would enhance the learning experience for cohorts.

13.3 The school should consider how new inter disciplinary relationships can be developed across the School of Architecture, Technology and Engineering for students and staff, and explore how these might add to research and teaching cultures.

13.4 The school should consider how appropriate administrative support can be put place, and how this can be used to enhance the delivery and management of teaching and research.

13.5 The Board advises that the school develop an internationalisation strategy to support continued engagement with Overseas partners, and the enhance the student experience for all students.

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.

14.1 Part 1

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1.

14.2 Part 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2.

14.3 Part 3

The Board confirmed that all Part 3 professional criteria were met by graduates of the Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Practice, and Law in Architecture, Part 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.

Please see action point 12.2. The Board made no further comments.

16. Other information

16.1 Student numbers – total = 395

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: 336

Master of Architecture (MArch), Part 2: 36

Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Practice, and Law in Architecture,
Part 3: 23

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

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Part 1 and 2 students
- Part 3 candidates
- Head of institution
- External examiners
- Staff