



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA full visiting board
to the Caucasus University**

Caucasus School of Architecture and Design
Tbilisi, Georgia

Date of visiting board: 17 & 18 July 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 12 October 2023

- 1 Details of institution hosting courses**
Caucasus School of Architecture and Design
Caucasus University
1 Paata Saakadze St, Tbilisi 0102
Georgia
- 2 Courses offered for validation**
BA in Architecture
- 3 Dean of School**
Mariam Menabde PhD
- 4 Awarding body**
Caucasus University
- 5 The visiting board**
Professor Kevin Singh (Chair)
Professor Lorraine Farrelly (Vice-Chair)
Dr Sara Biscaya
David Danelia – regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – validation manager
- 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 12 October 2023 the RIBA confirmed Part 1 validation of the following course:

BA in Architecture*

The next visit to the Caucasus University will take place in 2028.

*This BA in Architecture programme offers instruction in two languages - Georgian and English.
- 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 history of the Caucasus University as one of the first private universities in Georgia began in 1998 when the Caucasus School of Business was established. Its motto "Studium Pretium Libertatis" (knowledge is the guarantee of freedom) is fully acknowledged, supported, and celebrated within the entire university and is precepted in its philosophy, values, and goals. The Caucasus University resides in a fully renovated historic building, a significant architectural landmark, unifying eleven schools with a student population of nearly 10,000 students. The Caucasus University (CU) is operating with 53 study programs of all levels BA, MA, and PhD, in Georgian and English languages with a number of joint and double degree programs. Internationalization is the key component of the university endeavours. The university acknowledges its third mission and contributes to the social, economic, and cultural development of society, social engagement, continuous education, and transfer of knowledge and innovations.

The University permanently strives to follow market needs by offering competitive, quality study programs and supporting the regional, national, and international markets with competitive human capital. In 2017 the BA program of Architecture was established as part of the Caucasus School of Technology with the mission to prepare competitive specialists in accordance with the latest requirements of the field with a focus on issues of sustainability, ethics, heritage preservation, health & safety, and other strategic pillars of modern architecture. In 2021 with the contribution of the RIBA validation process and recommendations The School of Architecture and Design was established as an independent entity. The School of Architecture and Design (CSA) supports fast-developing programs in the architecture and design fields with its appealing content and innovative teaching-learning approaches. The programs are constantly updated, upon the courses' assimilation to the latest advancements in the field, taking into account students, lecturers, and external examiners' feedback, and incorporating local and global issues. Although CSA's English language architecture program is newly established, it draws up to 60% of all entrants for English language programs in Georgia with its design and content offering diverse theoretical and practical knowledge.

CSA aims to develop qualified specialists who have theoretical knowledge in the field and the skills necessary for research or practical work by creating a competitive learning environment, introducing innovative teaching-learning methodologies, and developing relevant field programs with the participation of highly qualified academic staff as well as practitioners, who provide students with invaluable experiential learning opportunities by enabling them to gain firsthand exposure to authentic work environments. Therefore, at the School of Architecture and Design, within the English-language architecture program, students are able to acquire synthetic theoretical and practical knowledge based on system analysis. CSA strives to broaden students' knowledge-based creative horizons by having not only multiple courses with diverse ECTS but extracurricular activities, so they can learn more, experience more, and be able to initiate and plan the project from designing its exterior, architectural safety, sustainability, and urban planning. The learning objectives of our curriculums are to observe learning outcomes such as being inclusive, ethical, environmentally and socially aware, collaborative

and innovative. The program is composed of a number of mandatory and optional courses and the students need to acquire a total of 240 credits in 4 years to graduate with a bachelor's degree in architecture. Our curriculum is designed to include courses in architectural history and theory, architectural constructions and planning, contemporary and sustainable architecture, city and urban planning and design, the architecture of Tbilisi, computer drafting and modeling, architectural safety, management, and many more principles of architecture to expand students' perspectives and experiences. Our student-centered and development-oriented program helps students to acquire sets of skills and track their own evolution with their mentors being practitioners in the architectural field. Within the program, courses are tailored to local regulations and requirements as well as global practices, values, and professional ethics. All of these enable bachelors of architecture to have a wide choice of job opportunities as they can be employed at state and private architectural offices, at state structures like local government bodies (licensing, regulatory, and controlling), architectural firms and design studios, architectural-construction and developer companies, services and foundations of protecting historical-cultural heritage and partner companies.

The English-language architecture program at CSA upholds well-defined values and goals and strives to nurture graduates who possess a deep understanding of locally rooted knowledge while also being attuned to the rapidly evolving global landscape. By doing so, graduates are prepared to make meaningful contributions to the sustainable development of the country while engaging with the Georgian government's Green Growth Strategy initiatives and working with several international non-governmental organizations and representatives of the public and private sectors initiated by the school. CSA actively develops relations between its students and employers. Together with the Career Development Office, CSA supports student employment and hosts open-door events where partners of the most successful and outstanding companies make presentations and students are given an opportunity to receive information necessary for internship and further employment in the company.

CSA's architectural studio provides students with a technologically equipped lab that fosters creative thinking, project development, critical analysis, mentorship support, and iterative problem-solving through constructive feedback. CSA's aims are executed through its architectural studio with its current and implemented activities for internal and external stakeholders, including the following:

- "Architectroni" annual competition: High school graduates can showcase their creativity and compete for grants to cover tuition fees.
- Bazaleti annual workshop: Students participate in a workshop led by invited speakers to explore sustainable development goals and their application in architecture and urban planning.
- Ivertubani public space competition: CSA's students participated in a competition organized by Chughureti municipality, and selected projects were implemented as real projects by the municipality.
- Telavi public space concept: In collaboration with an Architecture Studio and Telavi municipality, students developed a concept for the development of recreational public space in Telavi.

BA program in architecture reflects the school and university's aspiration of providing quality education, supporting the local and global market with qualified human capital, contributing to field development, and societal well-being.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the philanthropic approach of the University to develop a School of Architecture for the benefit of the city, region, and country, and with such ambition.
- 10.2 The Board commends the School for creating an environment that facilitates and encourages a positive student experience and empowers students to be engaged and articulate.

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's expectation is that the Part 1 course will have a minimum of 50% of all assessed work in the form of integrated design projects. At present there are a number of courses that would not normally be considered as such, namely; Architecture Construction 1 and 2, and the Safety of Buildings and Facilities which would normally be categorized as Technology. The 50% requirement needs to be addressed to fall within accepted norms.
- 12.2 There are very limited examples of student essays and writing across the course, and this currently falls below RIBA normal expectations. It is important that students are required to write essays to develop critical writing skills and which also complement their design skills and helps them prepare for Masters programmes and the associated Dissertation. As a suggestion, a 2000-2500 word essay within each of the 4 years would be appropriate.
- 12.3 The Board asks the School to develop its relationship with external advisers and/or examiners so that they are an active part of the development of the programme, this should include annual meetings to provide feedback on curriculum content and professional standards by architecture subject specialists.
- 12.4 The Board welcomes the School's aspirations to address climate change, however, the School should further consider how this agenda can be delivered to support the integration of environmental strategies and sustainability within the design projects at both a strategic and practical level.
- 12.5 The facilities and resources available to students should be constantly reviewed to ensure they are appropriate for the current and projected student

numbers. For example, the current architecture studio space is not adequate for growing student numbers.

- 12.6 The library is under resourced and has very few architecture books and journals. This needs to be addressed to encourage a culture of students utilising the library resources and relying less on individual staff for their references. As well as much needed books, (especially monographs), access to professional journals and other contemporary references are needed to maintain the students' design literacy and awareness of international professional, technical and cultural issues related to the architecture discipline are needed. This will also help foster a research culture.

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 were fascinated by the city of Tbilisi and its history and context, along with its eclectic architecture. The Board advises that the School utilise this rich context more in the development of its agendas and the setting of project briefs.
- 13.2 The Board advises that students should be strongly encouraged to evidence their design process more clearly and comprehensively including aspects such as the conceptual and theoretical position of the work, the use of precedent, site analysis, and design iterations.
- 13.3 The Board encourages the School to pursue mechanisms to encourage a more innovative approach to construction and materiality. At present the construction solutions proposed by students are very conventional and the design projects would benefit from a more innovative approach.
- 13.4 To ensure that students' assessments display current knowledge of local professional practice issues, local building codes and regulations, to enhance their preparation for practice.

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 Graduate Attributes for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the BA 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.

15.1 Themes and Values for Part 1

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

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

BA in Architecture (offered in Georgian and English): 187

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 next full visiting board.**

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