RIBA

Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of Greenwich

Date of visiting board: 27 & 28 October 2022
Confirmed by RIBA: 20 March 2023

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1 **Details of institution hosting courses**
   University of Greenwich
   Department of Architecture
   School of Design
   10 Stockwell Street
   London
   SE10 9BD

2 **Courses offered for validation**
   BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
   Master of Architecture MArch, Part 2
   Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Part 3

3 **Programme Leaders**
   Simon Herron: Academic Portfolio Lead, Head of Architecture Part 1 and 2
   Tony Clelford: Academic Portfolio Lead, Head of Professional Practice Part 3
   Susanne Isa, BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1, Programme Lead
   Rahesh Ram, MArch Part 2 Programme Lead

4 **Awarding body**
   University of Greenwich

5 **The visiting board**
   Luke Murray – Chair
   Craig Stott
   Ryan Stuckey
   Dr Aisling Rusk

   In attendance:
   Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – validation manager

6 **Procedures and criteria for visit**
   The Visiting Board operated under the RIBA Procedures for Validation 2021.
   The School was able to choose whether to use the outgoing criteria or the
   incoming themes and values. The RIBA procedures for validation can be
   found at www.architecture.com.

7 **Proposals of the visiting board**
   On 20 March 2023 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the following
   courses:

   > BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
   > Master of Architecture MArch, Part 2
   > Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, 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)

Introduction

Architecture at the University of Greenwich can be traced back to the Hammersmith College of Art and Building (founded in 1881) and the second National Polytechnic at Woolwich (founded in 1890).

During a transformative period in educational history, these pioneering institutions were created to address that era's significant inequalities in access to education. The two bodies merged forming Thames Polytechnic (in 1970) and the University of Greenwich (1992). Their shared foundational values for the provision of 'Education Without Boundaries' is still integral to Architecture at the University of Greenwich today.

During its history, Architecture at the University of Greenwich has been based in a variety of settings from Hammersmith to Dartford, to Avery Hill. With the 2014's move to the new purpose-built accommodation in Stockwell Street designed by Heneghan Peng, Architecture and the School of Design are now in the heart of Greenwich, alongside a suite of university buildings within the UNESCO World Heritage site – placing Architecture and the School of Design at the centre of university life.

Distinction and Excellence

The School of Design defines itself as an international centre for excellence for collaborative study and research, where equality, diversity and inclusivity are foundational to our multi-disciplinary community. We are committed to engaging with the principal challenges of our time, where ethics is foregrounded in response to the global climate and biodiversity emergency, achieving sustainable development goals and net zero carbon ambitions.

The School of Design has four distinct academic portfolios, Architecture, Design Anthropology, Media, Landscape Architecture and Urbanism. Architecture continues its close association with Landscape Architecture in teaching and research across programmes, sharing many of the buildings core features, including fourteen landscape roofs, research greenhouses and aquaponics facilities, spacious studios, computer suites, and workshop equipped with both traditional and digital tools. Continued commitment can be demonstrated by £300K of ongoing school wide investment in software and equipment.

There is a shared aspiration to continue to forge close ties between subject areas in both teaching and research. What does this look like in practice? At Part One nearly a third of credits studied in Technology and History over three years are taught in modules shared with Landscape Architecture students. At Part Two, acknowledging their different programme structures we have developed together the foundational module Future Representation, emphasizing design as a shared value. In future, we see a potential for

Architectural Thesis to take advantage of the breadth of the School of Design's expertise. This is illustrated by reviews and contributions to the Research Methods Lecture series.

Looking beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries is essential to the development of a progressive academic and research environment. It is a necessity in the complex multidisciplinary professional world we now occupy. This can be demonstrated by the Captivate Spatial Modelling Group, an interdisciplinary research group formed in 2020. Captivate uses remote sensing technologies to build high fidelity digital models of cultural heritage for conservation, museological, pedagogical purposes.

Programmes at Greenwich aim to address and define positive trends and understanding in the field of architecture, to posit new aesthetic systems and codes of representation, and to facilitate a body of creative knowledge, both practical and theoretical, that allows students to develop and refine their own design language, albeit within a rigorous academic framework.

Architecture Part 1 - Part 3
Design is at the core of our programmes at Part One, Two and Three. It is the generator that powers everything, we believe that excellence in design should incorporate excellence in technology and, equally, be informed by a thorough understanding of the Histories, Theories and Futures of Architecture. Student success can be evidenced through the winning of international awards and prizes, including continued recognition and success in the annual RIBA Presidents Medals and through sustained high levels of employability post Part 1 and Part 2.

The University of Greenwich has always been committed to widening participation. Our students come from an exceptionally diverse range of backgrounds and educational experiences. The BA Architecture programme welcomes the wide spread of abilities our students bring, and the curriculum is specifically designed to gradually build skills and competencies without holding back those who are more able. This progresses through the student journey culminating in third year with a dissertation, technical study and comprehensive design project.

At Part Two, we recruit a significantly large number of students from other Universities, around 75-%- 80% of the cohort most of these come with upper second-class degrees or better. The MArch Architecture programme has been designed with care to ensure that all students are equipped with an appropriate skill base to progress into the profession.

We offer two distinct programme pathways – two-year full time or three-year part time. The content and modes of delivery remain the same, students following both pathways are side by side enriching the experiences of both. Our part time route offers a distinct alternative to level 7 apprenticeship by providing the confidence of an established MArch programme alongside the benefits associated with work.

Architecture is not a monoculture; its diversity can be seen in its teaching staff, its student cohort and through the work of its studios. To maintain this diversity, the School of Design supports the distinctiveness of the 'unit'

system. The units at Greenwich range from the more pragmatic, to the those which are more speculative. The tools of these units range from exquisite hand drawings, parametric and generative systems, to film and animation. In many aspects of our teaching practice, we are fusing traditional studio and practice-based pedagogy with more contemporary approaches that fully exploit the potential of online media, virtual learning environments and social networking.

At both undergraduate and postgraduate level, the approach to technology and professional studies is to try, wherever possible, to integrate them into studio design projects so that the issues can be seen as applied rather than abstract. In our Part Two programme we have adopted the position that Year One provides the major technical and professional focus, and is clearly vocational, while Year Two allows for a wider academic and speculative focus and equips students for life beyond university.

Architecture and the School of Design alike, make great virtue of its links to the profession, with many of its staff on fractional contracts and still active as practitioners. Likewise, many unit staff are taken from practice, with the teaching of technology supported by bringing in Practice Tutors and consultants to support the preparation of the major technology reports in Year Three BA and Year One MArch. We recognise the need to diversify our academic body to better reflect our community. An exciting development is the impact of former Greenwich graduates returning to our community to teach, sharing their experience as students and practitioners.

PDAP [the Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Greenwich's Part Three Programme] prepares candidates for entry to the profession. It is predicated on the idea that architects' skills are of little use unless they are also applied to the design of procurement and delivery systems, whether they be on site or designing effective and efficient studio structures. PDAP's unique learning environment has been praised by students and examiners alike.

Architecture education is undergoing profound and significant change. At Greenwich we are making sure that the nature of what we teach, and research is flexible, reacting to the advances in technology and critical thought to meet the challenges of our time. We are equipping our students with a toolkit of tactics and strategies to complement a more traditional body of skills, and strive to ensure they have the same passion and drive for their work that we ourselves have for our own teaching and research.

We ask our students to be innovative: we therefore have an obligation to provide an environment that encourages and enables this to take place. Within this constructed model Architecture as a creative discipline has the potential to develop powerful tools for addressing the unknown, unlocking new uses, new meanings and new possibilities.

10 Commendations

10.1 The Board commends the collegiate atmosphere of the School; the quality of staff and culture of kindness, and the diverse, happy, ambitious student body.

10.2   The Board commends the reflective and adaptive approach of the architecture leadership team.

10.3   The Board commends the full occupation of the Stockwell Street building and all its spaces, including its use as a learning and teaching aid.

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 should integrate fire, health and life safety, and climate literacy that can be demonstrated across all stages of the courses.

12.2   The School should develop a marketing strategy for the MArch part time course to enhance its widening participation and accessibility strategy.

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 provide a student budget for materials to incentivise model-making and use of the workshop

13.2   The Board advises that the School develop their Academic Position Statement as a collegiate exercise, to more clearly articulate the School's vision and research agenda.

13.3   The Board advises the School to seek more opportunities for interdisciplinary projects and working with local communities.

13.4   The Board advise the School to appoint additional external examiners at Part 1 to reflect the course's growing student numbers.

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 Architectural Practice, 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.

15.1 The Board made no further comments.

16 Other information
16.1 Student numbers
BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: 270
Master of Architecture MArch, Part 2: 136
Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Part 3: 58

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.**

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