

RIBA 

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board  
to the Korea National University of Arts -  
2022**

**Date of visiting board:** 19, 20 & 21 October 2022

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee:** 20 March 2023

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

Korea National University of Arts  
146-37 Hwarang-ro 32-gil  
Seongbuk-gu  
Seoul  
South Korea

**2 Courses offered for validation**

Part 1: First 3 years of the Bachelor of Architecture  
Part 2: Final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture

**3 Head of Department of Architecture**

Kangil Ji

**Course Leaders**

Byungchan Kim, Part1  
Taeyoung Kim, Part2

**4 Awarding body**

Korean National University of Arts

**5 The visiting board**

John Ashton – Chair  
Alida Bata  
Sabine Storp  
Jaime Solloso – RIBA – Validation Manager

**6 Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education**

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](http://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: First 3 years of the Bachelor of Architecture  
Part 2: Final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture

The next visit to the Korea National University of Arts 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)**

Adopting the motto of "Excellence beyond Compliance" since its creation in 1997, the Architecture Programme at K-Arts has operated with an aim of nurturing creative architects who can implement projects by breaking free from all archaic usages and conventions with an unbridled, original way of thinking and creative intuition. It has set three basic goals of education:

### **1 Architect as a Creative Artist**

Demands for conformity to institutions forced by power and capitalism threaten the integrity of architects. The programme pursues 'the architect as a creative artist' who contemplates and questions reality with their creative eyes focusing on the reality of the future, while nurturing an understanding of traditions and history and at the same time, working in the present.

### **2 Architect as a Profession**

Architecture as a discipline continues to broaden. The knowledge and skill sets required become more and more specialized and technical. Facing such demands, the programme aims to foster 'an architect as a professional artisan' with due competency and expertise while still maintaining critical and creative perspectives.

### **3 Architect as a Social Designer**

The programme exhorts the 'architect as a social designer' to define and develop the values that lead to new architecture for a better society. It teaches the importance of communication, coordination and design decision-making with diverse stakeholders for the growing conflicts between theory and practice, culture and engineering, technology and art, tradition and modernity, local communities and global citizenship, as well as the city and the environment.

Alumni who have graduated from the Architecture Programme over the last 22 years are pioneers, working as Artists integrating art and architecture, Professional Architects exploring the new dimensions of space and tectonics, and Social Agents that explore social roles of architecture in today's rapidly changing world. Many graduates have received prestigious awards in recognition of their contributions and excellence.

A distinctive feature of the K-Arts Architecture Programme is that a variety of curricula are linked to studio-oriented design education. The design studios, run for one year over two semesters, are configured to apply research methodologies and architectural expression on Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels. The scope and level of complexity of structural and technical courses, history and theory courses, and of the Media Studios are aligned with these levels. Students complete their individual academic portfolios by taking courses in sequence. In this process, when additional knowledge, special skills

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and specific tools are needed, external resources and expertise are provided by individual short-term workshops, special lectures, and field trips.

- Acquired knowledge from structural and technical courses is to be applied to the Design Studios' projects through the Technical Studios.
- Based on the acquired knowledge from history and theory courses, topics are chosen and developed into individual theses in the module, Thesis Seminar. Many theses have won numerous awards from the thesis competition of the Architectural Institute of Korea Graduation
- The skills commanding various media for the expressions of ideas are acquired through the Media Studios. They include hand-drawing, model-making, 2D and 3D computational drawings, and filming. These skills are actively used in developing projects into portfolios.

The K-Arts Architecture Programme fosters a culture in which students learn and communicate with each other through various interactions. The vertical studio, where two different years' students are taught, is one of the significant characteristics of the education system. Outside the regular curricula, the activities of the student council and other student groups are actively promoted. Through this, students are encouraged to develop their own particular interests and skills as architects. Financial support is also provided for these activities as well as the accessibility to workshops, studios, and conference rooms.

The programme awards PART 1 and PART 2 after the completions of Year 3 and Year 5 respectively. But it is a seamless, continuing course awarding a bachelor's degree after five years without accepting transfer students for PART 2.

Exposed to various art education courses in the School of Visual Arts, students explore body and space in their first year, understanding architecture as a creative art. The next two years are when the fundamentals of architecture are taught to future architects. At the advanced level of the last two years, when the communication, negotiation and decision-making is learned as a crucial part of the architect's role, students are equipped with the understanding and ability to design architecture in relation with the society, the city and the environment.

The teaching and learning environment is more and more heavily affected by contemporary conditions, which are found to be connected globally and thus cannot be solved with local efforts while the locality is still affecting everyday life. With the modes of the practice changing across various industries related to architecture, the way architecture is thought and taught needs to address the changes. At the basic level, the programme adjusts teaching to better equip students with relevant skills. More advanced engagement in the socio-political landscape of reality is emphasized in design briefs to help students develop critical thinking in their projects. For this aim, the Programme introduces the following strategies:

- To connect history and theory courses with special lectures and forums where external scholars and experts are invited
- To strengthen portfolios with the current knowledge and application of art, research, media, and technology that foster artistic reflection and creativity by various workshops with artists, researchers, and designers across these fields
- To adjust the syllabus of Media Studio courses to accommodate fast changes in the use of media around art and technology

- To strengthen the integration of design, theory, and technology for nurturing a holistic approach to design
- To reinforce design studios with diverse workshops and special lectures dealing with complex social, urban, and environmental conditions

Education for architectural design ability that satisfies both aesthetic and technical requirements is the most basic and crucial criteria. It is taught across the basic, intermediate, and advanced studios with the associated Media Studios. Understanding of the humanities - art, technologies, and human sciences (GC 2) - as a prerequisite is acquired through theory, history, and technology courses, and is to be developed into theses and design projects. Utilizing the programme's position within the art university, the knowledge of various art genres as an influence on the quality of architecture (GC 3) is taught and applied in specific contexts of media and design studios

The understanding of human needs, scale, and requirements (GC 5, GC 7) is taught at basic and advanced levels of Design Studios and Technology Studios. In the advanced courses, the mediation and adjustment of users' requirements are taught in consideration of the constraints of cost factors and constructability (GC10). The understanding of technology in architectural design is taught for integration into building system such as structure and environment (GC 8, GC 9) in the Design Studios and Technology Studios of basic and advanced levels. Comprehensive design is understood with various factors like materials, construction techniques, and building regulations in relevant courses (GC 10).

Best utilizing the characteristics of the Architecture Programme, which places the urban conditions at its pedagogical focus, the process of designing 'urban architecture' is guided through related research and analysis, criticism on urban planning methods and design outcomes, and the understanding of environmental quality (GC 4). As the brief for design gets more complicated with emerging urban, environmental, and technological conditions, the changing aspects of the architect's role in society (GC6) is taught with an emphasis on attitude, stance, and methodology to actively accommodate the complexity of urban architecture.

## **10 Commendations**

- 10.1** The board commends the collegiate nature of the school and the sense of community created for students by staff and senior management, and the support for students provided by staff throughout their academic journey.
- 10.2** The board commends the school's future commitment to exploring new technologies, facilities and equipment as an opportunity for developing the student's learning experience.
- 10.3** The board commends the school's commitment to the ethos of RIBA criteria at Part 1 and Part 2, and the rigour, criticality and quality of the programme and student work.
- 10.4** The board commends the school's relationship with professional practice through the teaching body, and the unique interdisciplinary learning opportunity this brings within wider context of the arts school.

**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 update their academic position statement in line with RIBA guidance and recommendations on format, reflecting on the past 5 years since the last report. The academic position statement content should better reflect the distinctive qualities of the school. The statement should explain the school's ambitions, ethos, identities and changes made throughout the remote teaching period, in relationship to the validated courses.

**12.2** Whilst learning outcomes are evident in the student portfolios, the learning objectives and outcomes are not clearly articulated in the course documentation. The board requests that assessment criteria are made explicit in course documentation.

**12.3** The board recognises the unique learning opportunities available to the students within the context of the wider art school. The board requests that the distinctive interdisciplinary nature of the course is more clearly evidenced in the portfolios.

**12.4** The board strongly advises that sustainability as a wholistic subject is prominently embedded in the school and programme, to help encourage forward thinking towards the RIBA's Themes and Values for Architectural Education. The teaching body acknowledge the need to design for a changing climate, however this was not clearly evidenced in portfolios.

**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 mapping of the architecture programme should clarify how content and delivery comprise at least 50% design.

**13.2** The students highly valued the opportunity for international exchange, but the current credit system does not seem compatible. The school should explore the opportunity to enable credit bearing international exchange within the 5-year course.

**13.3** The Board advises that design portfolios are more critically edited with students encouraged to become more critically reflective to enable a concise and focussed presentation of their design portfolio.

- 13.4 In Part 2, the Board encourages the school to enhance the integration of materiality and tectonics as part of the design projects, testing materials and construction methods in an innovative way to enable the students to explore new ways of application.
- 13.5 The board recognises the strong relationship between practice and the taught programme, facilitated through part-time staff. The board advises that, in parallel to this, more rigorous research methodologies are formalised, to strengthen the relationship between faculty research and teaching.
- 13.6 The Board strongly advises the school to foster a greater design ambition and experimentation in relation to ecological sustainability, inspired by local materials, climate understanding and construction techniques with an ethical standpoint throughout their studies. This should cover a variety of project scales during their year-long project briefs.
- 13.7 The school is encouraged to strengthen investment in the development of a student society to enable the students to establish a support network within their own community and help develop more opportunities for communication and exchange within the K-arts student body.
- 13.8 The board values the efforts the school has made to give the students an understanding of their own city, and now encourages the school to take a more prominent position in local issues within the immediate context.
- 13.9 The board requests that a range of complete academic portfolios is presented for future validation board visits. This should include all work which is mapped against the RIBA criteria for the graduating cohort.

**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 Parts 1 & 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the first 3 years of the Bachelor of Architecture and the final 2 years of the Bachelor of 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 Parts 1 & 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the first 3 years of the Bachelor of Architecture and the final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture.

**16 Other information**

**16.1 Student numbers (from the School) as of 2021**

**BA Arch (Part 1) Total: 54**

**M Arch (Part 2) Total: 42**

**16.2 Documentation provided**

The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

**17 Notes of meeting**

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 senior management team
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff