



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to Lancaster University**

**Date of visiting board: 23 & 24 November 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 5 February 2024**

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Lancaster School of Architecture
LICA Building
Lancaster University
Bailrigg
Lancaster LA1 4YW

2.1 Courses offered for Part 1 validation

BA (Hons) Architecture

2.2 Courses offered for Part 2 candidate course status

Master of Architecture MArch

3 Lancaster School of Architecture Head of Architecture

Des Fagan

BA (Hons) Architecture Course Leader

Dr Ana Costa

Master of Architecture Course Leader

Des Fagan

4 Awarding body

Lancaster University

5 The visiting board

Professor Paul Jones – Chair
Professor Lucelia Rodrigues – Vice Chair
Doug King
Andrew Wilson

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – 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 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

7.1 Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Architecture

On 5 February 2024 the RIBA confirmed unconditional validation for Part 1 of the following:

Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Architecture

The next full visiting board to the BA (Hons) Architecture programme will take place in 2028.

7.2 Master of Architecture MArch

On 5 February 2024 the RIBA confirmed that candidate course status for Part 2 be awarded to the:

Master of Architecture, MArch

Candidate course for validation status is recommended if the course content and structure are considered to have the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated. Candidacy is not equivalent to validation, which is only given once the standards of students' work have been reviewed and found satisfactory by an initial visiting board.

A full visiting board to consider the MArch for full Part 2 validation will take place at a date to be agreed between the School and the RIBA.

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 – to be imported)

Lancaster University's performance across a range of creative arts disciplines, in tandem with the University TEF gold provides an excellent foundation upon which to build our School of Architecture. Our objective is to explore architecture through experimentation and world leading research. To achieve this, our three key areas of investigation, Climate Emergency, Digital Craft and Future Practice, are tested through strong practice relationships to inform live projects and briefs, alongside strong research relationships that face global challenges. Students are embedded in a cross-disciplinary community of professors, researchers, and architects, collective engaged in architectural exploration that connects research, teaching and practice.

Locus Lancashire

Our unique location, adjacent to a small wood in a self-contained campus on the edge of a historic city with access to unique landscapes, provides an excellent locus from which to investigate the global climate emergency and its inherent environmental challenges. Protected areas, such as the Lake District, Morecambe Bay and the Trough of Bowland provide distinctive contexts from which to explore historical means of building amongst heritage and nature; re-discovering craft through the contemporary lenses of digitisation, automation and mechanisation. Our three key areas of interest are framed from this unique position, outside of a metropolitan orbit and engaged with the dispersed settlements of the north-west, including its post-industrial and energy landscapes alongside those that are pastoral and protected. The resources of the University – our new Forest Lab, the Ruskin Library and the Lancaster Environment Centre – alongside regional growth initiatives such as the Eden Project Morecambe, provide outstanding opportunities for staff and students to

test alternate means of living and working using the apparatus of sustainable and lean construction through our live research and live studio projects.

The Climate Emergency

The impact of climate change is embedded into our philosophy: it is part of our everyday conversation in design studio, explicit in our approaches to architectural technology and critically explored in our humanities programme. Carbon expenditure in the lifetime of a building is introduced early in the curriculum through carbon calculations that explore the impact of alternative material specification. This conversation is sustained across modules in design studio to inform design that is environmentally and socially driven from the point of inception. Students use a range of increasingly sophisticated tools across our two taught programmes to evaluate the performance of their design studio projects against the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes and UN Sustainable Goals. To contextualise this learning, our extracurricular Technology, Environment and Architecture (TEA Talks) series has delivered over thirty presentations in the last three years, with a primary focus on real world solutions to the decarbonisation of our environment. Students engage with these talks on multiple levels; as audience, organisers and as presenters themselves - in the annual Student TEATalks. To complement exploration on decarbonisation, our recent international symposium Towards an Architectural Theory for Sustainability examined the critical history of sustainable theory and its transposition into a global teaching context.

Digital Crafts

We examine and discover Digital Crafts through the exploration of historical methods of building and ornamentation and an embrace of custom manufacturing enabled by new technology. An Arts & Crafts sensibility, derived from our Grade II listed home, Bailrigg House, its garden, the Ruskin Collection and Ruskin's Lake District legacy, informs experimentation with ornamentation and craftsmanship; students are encouraged to appraise and augment the house through project work that examines how the Arts and Crafts movement might be reframed in our digital age. Our annual Lancaster Summer School is the primary vehicle through which we explore this theme – a non-credit bearing week of activities where students and staff explore traditional materials and techniques in willow, felt, and bamboo combined with computation and digitisation in full scale construction and testing. Our Forest Lab provides the backdrop to these activities, where vertical units of students, staff and guests enjoy experimenting with construction skills in the woods, delivered in the spirit of fun, exploration, and collaboration.

Future Pracce

Issues including rapid urbanisation, changing patterns of working, and accelerating digitalisation necessitate a new kind of architectural professional. Our students' integration into the world of practice is augmented by a series of practice focused ArchiExtra lectures delivered by practicing architects and researchers which run in parallel with studio sessions. To compliment this exploration, we have established a strong and growing network of practical experience – all students are offered a placement in local architectural practices in their second year through the RIBA North West Student Mentoring Scheme that provides experience and opportunity for approaching employment. We have formal ongoing partnerships with several leading

practices that enhance our studio teaching, providing a reciprocal relationship in which practitioners engage students with current issues, whilst academics help practices explore their priorities of research and development. The third-year humanities module sees invited speakers speculate on topics such as work, public space, environment and materials and their near futures. Our end-of-year exhibition and catalogue promote students' work to employers; we encourage students to start networking early, via organisation and invitation to events ranging from RIBA practice meet ups, awards ceremonies, competitions, and cross-University studio reviews.

Relationship Between Part 1 and Part 2

Students develop their creative practice within the context of expanding critical knowledge in their journey from Part 1 to Part 2. Curricula has developed in consultation with student forums, building on the democratic accent of the Student Climate Action Network, to align our delivery with students' interests. The Part 2 course provides natural progression from the module structure of Part 1, delivering a course which develops greater critical independence imbued with an increased focus on the inter-relationship between Heritage and Climate Change: specifically, to explore the inherent conflict between preservation, restoration and building new in the context of necessary adaptation to climate within UK and Global Heritage sites.

A Global Research Institute

All staff within the School of Architecture are active members of ImaginationLancaster; a world leading exploratory, design-led research centre conducting applied and theoretical research into people, products, places and their interactions. Our students are taught by research-led staff and lecturers who are experts in coproduction, bio-materials, material reuse, critical heritage, adaptive buildings and novel computation; representing the multidisciplinary knowledge we believe are essential to the future skills of the architect. Staff have delivered research outputs, focusing on key areas of interest in the school; from Material Passports, Coastal Erosion, AI and Authorship, infrastructural landscapes through to Biological Structures and Participatory Planning – our work engages with student interests, the curriculum, industry and academia across the globe, to generate impact.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The board commends the staff for their commitment to creating an excellent student experience, through a nurturing, student-centred approach.
- 10.2 The Board commends the student society, LSSA, for their pro-active approach to helping establish the collegiality of this new school, particularly the mentoring scheme.
- 10.3 The Board commends the appointment of high-calibre, dedicated and ambitious staff.

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 rewrite its academic position statement in anticipation of the forthcoming MArch full validation visit to better reflect the identity of the School.
- 12.2 The Board acknowledges the progress made at BA level; however, the School needs to ensure that there is sufficient intellectual shift between the BA and MArch programmes.
- 12.3 The School should put greater emphasis on design process and creative exploration to ensure that the requirements of design pedagogies and architectural expression are weighted appropriately in the curriculum across the BA and the MArch.
- 12.4 The University should develop a comprehensive strategy for estates and facilities to ensure the effective delivery of a growing programme of architecture.

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 At BA level the Board advises the School to focus on the rigorous and iterative application of climate literacy and other technology principles to inform design.
- 13.2 The Board advises the School to ensure that essential competencies in design, construction and technology are demonstrated in BA year 3 technical assessments.
- 13.3 The Board advises the School to introduce more diverse formats and use of media and techniques within the students' portfolios, at all levels to better communicate design intention and improve presentation standards.
- 13.4 The Board advises the School to build a wide network of contacts with practice to establish a pool for potential tutors, placements and research opportunities.

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 (Hons) Architecture programme.

14.2 Graduate Attributes for Part 2

The Board confirmed that the MArch had the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated and could therefore recommended for Part 2 Candidate Course status.

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 one or more of the themes and values 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 (Hons) Architecture course.

15.2 Themes and Values for Part 2

The Board confirmed that the MArch course had the potential to meet the RIBA's Themes and Values if implemented in the way anticipated.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: 129
MArch, Candidate Course for Part 2: 8

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 architecture budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with Head of Institution
- Meeting with staff