

RIBA 

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board  
to the University of Liverpool John Moores  
- 2022**

**Date of visiting board:** 16 & 17 June 2022

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee:** 13 February 2023

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

Liverpool School of Art and Design  
Liverpool John Moores University  
Duckinfield Street  
Liverpool  
L3 5RD

**2 Courses offered for validation**

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1  
Master of Architecture, MArch, Part 2

**3 Programme Leaders**

Ian Wroot - Head of Architecture  
Jamie Scott - BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: Programme Leader  
Dominic Wilkinson – MArch Architecture, Part 2: Programme Leader

**4 Awarding body**

Liverpool John Moores University

**5 The visiting board**

Musa Garba – Chair  
Harbinder Birdi– Vice Chair  
Aoife McGee  
Ralph Saull

**In attendance:**

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 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](http://www.architecture.com).

**7 Proposals of the visiting board**

The Board recommends to the RIBA Education Committee continued validation of the following courses:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1  
Master of Architecture, MArch, Part 2

The next visit to the University of Liverpool John Moores 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)**

Architecture programmes at Liverpool John Moores University are delivered in a unique school, which attracts students from diverse backgrounds, who wish to explore urban agendas with contemporary relevance and global impact in the field of art and design.

The Liverpool School of Art & Design (LSAD) is situated in the John Lennon Art & Design Building (JLADB), a modern purpose-designed resource in the heart of Liverpool's Knowledge Quarter. LSAD is the oldest school of art and design in England outside London, dating back to 1825, when it started life as the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute with the purpose of providing education to working men. By the 21st century LSAD had established a broader range of subjects and incorporated architecture (est.1958), and the move to the new building in 2008 enabled the school to bring together all its disciplines and exploit the practical and creative opportunities arising from the interaction between creative subjects. The new location provided a vibrant and exceptional teaching and learning environment for 1200 students, including advanced facilities and innovative technology.

Our dedicated studios provide uplifting and spacious environments with inspirational views over the city. The building also houses public galleries, a large adaptable auditorium and a series of social spaces that serve as a platform for the activities of the school and a hub for national and international cultural and creative exchanges. The JLADB also includes a number of workshops that combine state-of-the-art digital design, 3D fabrication technology and printing, textiles, and imaging facilities alongside more traditional methods of production and construction. On return to the JLADB following the pandemic, all students were inducted / refreshed into the workshop facilities; teaching staff place a concerted emphasis on physical model making, both as an integral part of the iterative design process and in final presentation. This enables the combination of teaching and work-related learning with practical knowledge, producing graduates that are ready for employment in a competitive, flexible, and challenging workplace.

Teaching embraces a variety of different modes of delivery, such as tutorials, seminars, live projects, lectures, practical sessions, debates, on-line resources, drop-in clinics, social events, and pop-ups. Research in LSAD is organised around labs within the Institute of Art and Technology, a cross faculty institute for artistic,

technological, and transdisciplinary research which informs our curriculum and underpins our teaching.

Following Liverpool's recognition as the European City of Culture in 2008, the city has continued to build on its status as the most significant place for art and design activity in the UK outside London. Liverpool has transformed itself through major building and urban development projects into which our graduates and students have had and continue to have a significant influence, and the university has pioneered civic influence through its cultural partnerships across the city. Collaborative engagement with RIBA North, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial, FACT, Bluecoat, Liverpool Philharmonic, Metal, Everyman, and many other leading arts, design and cultural organisations provide an important and productive set of collaborations for our students.

LJMU leads the way among UK universities with this far-sighted and enriching programme of cultural and artistic engagement for its students. It is a truly life-changing opportunity for every student to get involved in the arts. Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England

In addition, Liverpool has recently become recognised for socially engaged art, co-design, and creative enterprise, through participation in a range of live projects with arts organisations, community groups, and local authorities. In all these ways, the school, university, and city provide distinctive possibilities for students to engage socio-culturally in projects that have contemporary relevance.

Our Architecture programmes aim to:

**Provide a holistic approach**

Across both programmes, we integrate holistic course delivery within design modules that imbed historical, theoretical, technical, and environmental support studies within enquiry-based projects. At undergraduate level, predominantly, the city of Liverpool is used as a contextual laboratory to test concepts that have a local flavour with global implications. The postgraduate studio offers opportunities for explorations further afield. In all cases, programmatic ambitions emanate from both intuitive and analytical responses to place.

The over-arching ambition of our programmes is to create graduates with artistic flair who engage in divergent, creative, and critical thought processes that are also technically skilled and grounded in the demands of the professional role of the architect.

**Embed research**

Research undertaken by several members of staff was included in a successful REF2021 submission. In addition to dissemination through journal articles, books, book chapters and conference proceedings, staff research feeds and informs both undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching in different ways across the subject area. At one level, it contributes to the curriculum and project work, with staff utilising their research to inform their teaching. At another level, staff research in creative pedagogy feeds into the practice of learning, teaching, assessment and feedback, a process that enhances the student learning experience across their programme. Through a burgeoning international reputation, staff have been invited as

guest speakers and panel members at research and teaching events around the globe.

**Engage in cross-disciplinary, international collaboration**

The university has an ambition to offer an international experience to all students. The school has developed a range of student exchange programmes and travel bursaries. We run workshops abroad each year (excepting the pandemic years) in the BA and MArch programme. These often facilitate projects abroad in collaboration with foreign universities and local authorities. In recent years these have taken place in Porto, Marseille, Hamburg, Genoa, Gdansk, Elefsina, Ghent and Glasgow, with published outputs for each. In Sri Lanka we have a collaborating partner delivering franchised versions of our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These explore contemporary ideas around critical regionalism, tropical modernism and design for heritage and conservation.

**Explore of emerging technologies**

We encourage our students to explore new technologies in the creation, communication, and dissemination of their project outputs. Staff research into virtual and augmented reality technologies enabled us to create state of the art immersive degree experiences during the Covid 19 pandemic years. We have invested heavily in digital crit studio facilities that utilise digital mobile device and interactive large screen technologies in studio environments. These allow students to effectively utilise digital technologies in the presentation of their project work.

**Engage with the profession**

We have a commitment to have a practitioner alongside an academic in design review (crits) at all levels, so that our students have continual contact with industry experts. One of our current PhD students is Director of the recently established Liverpool Architecture Foundation which runs an annual month-long Architecture Festival in the city. Our Level 6 students engage in the RIBA practice mentoring scheme. We also have a university funded practice placement internship programme. We fully support the RIBA’s ambitions for greater diversity and inclusivity within the profession and have introduced a new foundation route into BA programme to encourage a more diverse intake.

**10 Commendations**

- 10.1** The Visiting Board commends the School of Art and Design for the provision of excellent facilities and technicians, which is greatly appreciated by students.
- 10.2** The Board commends Architecture staff for their notable commitment to the students in respect of pastoral care and teaching, in particular during the period of pandemic.
- 10.3** The Board commends the Architecture programme for the provision of drawing materials, equipment and additional funding which promotes equality amongst a diverse student population & which has pedagogical benefits to promote studio culture in the long-term.

**10.4** The Board commends the architecture programme for the live project module and how it is rooted in its region and context and draws on the schools' civic roots and its engagement with the community.

**11 Conditions**

There are no conditions/etc

**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 Visiting Board requires that an action plan is put in place to address current and future diversity in the staff body and at management level to reflect the gender and ethnicity of the student body.

**12.2** The Board requires the School to review the frequency and method of assessment in design modules in order to allow students the flexibility to test and experiment and to alleviate staff administrative burden to facilitate other tasks, such as research.

**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 further promote design process across the whole School to strengthen the level of design quality and resolution and to reflect this in the weighting of assessment.

**13.2** The Board advises the architecture programme to actively collaborate with other Art and Design disciplines to allow space for the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

**13.3** The Board advises the School to formulate an architectural alumni network to connect current and past students so that they can benefit from mentoring and employment opportunities. This was raised during the student meeting.

**13.4** The Board advises the School to reinvigorate the student society and give the students ownership with adequate funding, administrative and staff support to invite inspirational speakers from a global base and for student social events.

**13.5** The Board advises the School to establish a strategy to foster and nurture connections between BA and MArch students for interaction between academic years, to help facilitate peer to peer mentoring programme.

**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 BA (Hons) Architecture and the Master of Architecture, MArch.

**15 Review of work against criteria RIBA Themes and Values and Graduate Attributes**

It should be noted that where the visiting board considered a criterion graduate attribute to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a criterion graduate attribute clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a criterion graduate outcome was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

**16 Other information**

**16.1 Student numbers (from the School)**

**Part 1: 243**

**Part 2: 50**

**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 at the next full visiting board.**

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