



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to Liverpool University - 2023**

Date of visiting board: 29-30 June 2023

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 18 September 2023

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Liverpool School of Architecture
University of Liverpool
Abercromby Square
Liverpool L69 7ZN

2 Courses offered for validation

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

3 Head of School

Professor Ola Uduku – Head of School
Alexander Dusterloh – Deputy Head of School

3.1 Course Leaders:

Dr Patrick Zamarian – Director of Studies (BA)
Lucretia Ray – BA1 Lead
Dr Paco Mejias Villatoro – BA2 Lead
Richard Dod – BA3 Coordinator
Dr Marco Iuliano – Director of Studies (MArch)
Dr Aikaterini Antonopoulou – MArch 4 Lead
Johanna Muszbek – MArch 5 Lead

4 Awarding body

University of Liverpool

5 The visiting board

Kate Cheyne	Academic / Chair
Peter Culley	Practitioner
Athena Moustaka	Academic
Ryan Stuckey	Academic
Jaime Solloso	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 the 18 September 2023, the RIBA Educational Committee confirmed that the following course and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

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

The next visit to the Liverpool School of Architecture will take place in 2028.

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 institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

9 Academic position statement (written by the School)

The Liverpool School of Architecture (LSA) is one of Britain's oldest and preeminent architecture schools. Its international links are historic. LSA continues this legacy with its links to Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU). This ten-year-old joint venture enables student exchanges between both universities. Central to this is the '2+2' study route for BA students from XJTLU to study at LSA. Future collaborative study relationships with Milan, Aarhus, Bahrain, Kuala Lumpur and Lagos are planned. The high global standing of our research and teaching is reflected in our staffing and has – beyond our large XJTLU student cohort – resulted in strong international student recruitment to both the BA and MArch programmes. In Britain, we maintain a special relationship with the London School of Architecture, whose Part 2 programme we accredit and with whom we co-organise events such as the recent Stephen Lawrence memorial event in London.

LSA retains its historic studio-focused approach to architectural education whilst today incorporating the promotion of research-underpinned design projects and programmes. Complementing our global outlook, the School is deeply rooted in Liverpool, which offers a unique context for architectural education through its rich collage of historic settings, post-industrial landscapes, and areas of physical upgrading potential. LSA is proudly engaged with the city's regeneration efforts.

Our understanding of context from local to global scale makes our teaching particularly relevant to our global cohort of architecture students, who join LSA to become members strategic plan for an internationally renowned university. We are central to Liverpool University's campus. The University's support for LSA's future development is demonstrated by our new building, designed by RIBA Gold Medal winners O'Donnell+Tuomey and currently under construction. On completion, the building will provide 2,500 sqm, a 45% increase to our current floor area.

We have created a strong widening access programme, which allows us to engage and recruit more students from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. Generous bequests from our alumni have enabled us to fund scholarships and awards to support the education of deserving students. We work closely with RIBA North to promote schemes that support students with challenging needs. At LSA itself, we have since 2020 sponsored student interest groups involved in LGBTQ+, feminist, climate action and Black Architecture causes.

Our first-year programme ensures that students from diverse backgrounds acquire the basic design skills that are central to their architectural studies. These include traditional modes of drawing and making, including freehand sketching and modelmaking. Yet today's LSA students are also taught computer-aided design, film-making and various 21st-century 3-D production skills. This guarantees that our students are well-equipped for post- BA and MArch practice placement studies.

Throughout, the BA programme celebrates diversity and multiplicity of approaches by allowing students to follow their interests and develop an individual design approach. LSA students are encouraged to be self-critical and articulate about their design criteria. To support this, we have developed a distributed teaching system which ensures that we can offer a wide range of teaching approaches whilst maintaining a staff- student ratio of 1:12 or lower across all undergraduate years.

The distinctive MArch degree programme aligns with staff research and – through the dissertation, design thesis, and taught technical and practice skills – instils a research-informed approach in students' endeavours. This provides the necessary intellectual background for practice as well as future research pursuits. Students engage with LSA research specialisms such as housing, urban form and social space, history and heritage, visual culture, and landscape. In coming years, this will incorporate an even broader range of "research strands" of staff expertise, to include community-agency, urban resilience, and global heritage. Further international design collaboration programmes are also planned.

In our teaching, we are exploring the development of a series of integrated studios. This will link the research- focused studio teaching in the MArch to the studio programmes in the BA3, allowing us to create synergies between the two taught accredited programmes. These studios might also benefit from our strong master's and PG taught programmes, which have relevant research strengths in environmental technology, architectural history and digital production and fabrication.

We will use the construction of our new architecture building as a real-time teaching tool for students. We also see it as a vehicle through which to explore our environmental performance as a holistic process, from our current and future school design to our individual environmental footprint as staff and students. A multidisciplinary, multiyear project such as this helps us to attract students from diverse and international backgrounds as we engage with the relevant issues of today and thus demonstrate the intellectual, practical and developmental relevance of our teaching. Recently, we worked with an integrated team of students from different BA and March year groups in the design of a community hall. We hope to develop more live projects in future and expanding this to international collaborations.

Our BA and MArch students have been recognised in architecture awards. In 2020, two MArch4 projects won second prizes in the worldwide 'Terraviva Tactical Urbanism' competition. In 2021, an MArch5 thesis won the Best Design Research award at the World Architecture Festival's student competition while LSA students came second in the Liverpool Architecture Society's competition for "Wellbeing in the Time of Covid", open to all architects and students in the Northwest.

The award-winning architect and teacher Ilze Wolff will become Professor of Practice Architecture from the next academic year, preceded by Luca Csepely-Knorr's recent appointment as Research Professor in Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Both appointments show our commitment to diversifying our teaching and research interests and inclusivity in senior staffing for the School. A series of new visiting professorial appointments have further broadened our staffing profile.

We seek to further develop our links with the London School of Architecture. Their newly designed learn-practice architecture training is complementary to our educational offer, which might facilitate fruitful student exchanges and collaboration on admissions processes.

Looking to the future, we are eager to develop similar hybrid collaborations with architecture schools in the Global South, where we already have strong staff research interests and links. We also seek to rebuild our relations with schools in the West, furthering and expanding our global links and involvement in architectural themes and speculations.

Ultimately, the 21st century Liverpool School of Architecture seeks to truly become again: “The World in one School”

10 Commendations

10.1 The Board commends the strength of the School community to which both students and staff belong, and the strong collegiate atmosphere.

10.2 The Board commends the belief in and support for the School of Architecture by the Faculty and wider University as evidenced by the investment in leadership and facilities including the ambitious current building project.

10.3 The Board commends the School on its culture of self-reflection, internationally acclaimed research groups and responsiveness to alternate voices, ensuring the ongoing evolution of a progressive architectural curriculum.

10.4 The Board commends the MArch course for equipping students with the skills and knowledge to question the broadening context of architectural practice, and in particular, a research-led approach to design.

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 clarify, to both students and staff, the formal process and support available from the wider University around pastoral care to avoid conflicts of responsibilities and duties.

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 Whilst recognising the School’s ambition to equip students with a comprehensive portfolio and produce graduates that are immersed in contemporary issues, the Board suggests that the third-year briefs offer more room for spatial and material experimentation in line with MArch projects.

13.2 The Board advises that the School continue to work with the Faculty to evolve the External Examining process to allow for more time for EEs to review student work.

13.3 The Board advises the School to take the opportunity to develop exemplary approaches around the integration of extensive global and local communities and research networks in order to become pedagogic leaders in the field.

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

The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and the Master 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

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture and graduates of the Master of Architecture.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

BA (Hons) Architecture (**Part 1**): 619
 Master of Architecture (**Part 2**): 72

16.2 Documentation provided

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