

RIBA 

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to London Metropolitan University - 2022**

Date of visiting board: 30 June & 1 July 2022

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 13 October 2022

1 Details of institution hosting courses

London Metropolitan University
Old Castle Street
London
E1 7NT

2 Courses offered for validation

Part 1: BA (Hons) Architecture
Part 2: MArch Architecture
Part 3: Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture
24 months

3 Programme Leaders

Prof. Christian Frost, Head of Architecture
Sandra Denicke-Polcher, Deputy Head of Architecture

Course leader/s

Jane McAllister, BA Architecture (RIBA Part 1) Programme Leader
Nate Kolbe, M Arch (RIBA Part 2) Programme Leader
Mary Kelly, PG Cert in Professional Practice in Architecture (RIBA Part 3)
Programme Leader

4 Awarding body

London Metropolitan University

5 The visiting board

Professor Robert Brown - Chair
Peter Culley
Onur Ozkaya

In attendance:

Jaime Solloso – RIBA – validation manager

6 Procedures and criteria for the online visit

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.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

On the 13 October 2022 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

BA Hons Architecture, Part 1
Master of Architecture, MArch, Part 2
Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture. Part 3

The next RIBA 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)

• School Ethos

The context of a shifting climate, renewed attention to social justice, and architectural education in a state of flux, the Department of Architecture at London Metropolitan University continues to promote an applied education in architecture at the highest level, offering our students a choice between a range of different approaches and design units to stimulate discussion and critical engagement across all years. Insights into the variety of opportunities available within the subject area - nationally and globally - are underpinned by our belief that we all have a 'duty of care' to each other and to our environment which together fall under the heading 'Building Ecologies.' The ethos at the heart of Building Ecologies questions the relationship between architecture and the multiple ecologies of nature, social life and urban environments and creates a focus upon all of our activities; such as the value of learning thorough making/doing; that we all have a duty of care towards the people, the planet and the city; and that we understand architecture/city/nature as a complex system in which the praxis and practice of architecture is one part of a larger eco-system. The values which guide our ethos are shaped by our location (Place), our staff and students (People) and the work we do (Projects) in relation to what we consider essential for our teaching and learning practices.

• Place

Our site in Aldgate includes a well-stocked library and specialist workshops for wood, metal, ceramics, printing, and photography that are unique to our central London location, and we also have a large atrium exhibition space that hosts several events throughout the year from the courses in our School of Art, Architecture and Design. Consequently, the architecture studios, which are gathered around this atrium, contribute to a larger community of practice that celebrates and engages with work across all the creative disciplines within the School. Significantly, each of these studios is allocated to a teaching group for the whole academic year to give opportunities for students to work together outside scheduled teaching times in their own dedicated rooms. Thus, all students can find a 'home' within the building- in a class, in the School, and eventually in the local community through our outreach projects. We are committed, therefore, to our identity within an art School in the city and are excited at the prospect of retaining our position as an

institution with a foothold on the boundary between the City of London and the diverse hinterlands of Tower Hamlets.

- People

We continue our commitment to build a diverse community of students and staff offering a wide range of approaches to architecture. We have broadened our outreach to include local practices (including teachers, artists and designers as well as architects) and their wider networks of clients, consultants and communities offering many of our students the possibility of work experience as a part of the degree programme. Such contact between students, staff, and practitioners is facilitated in order that students on all our courses have opportunities to discuss the latest issues affecting the profession with different professionals and, at the same time, broaden the discourse surrounding the key issues they will face in the future. The organisation of the teaching teams in the different topic areas allows the students to identify distinct thresholds of achievement, but also gives them opportunities to mentor others in different years and on different courses. So first years can mentor those beginning their journey on Foundation, PG can mentor UG, and recent graduates can encourage and help guide students due to submit their work for graduation. Within this framework our new Architecture Apprenticeship Part 2 and Part 3 further develops this diversifying agenda by facilitating relationships from placements, through year out, and into postgraduate study allowing students to continue their pathway into the profession while funded by employers. We have also added a February Start option for the first year in architecture to try to catch students who were not ready to enter university in September. This group combines with the September starters to create a single second year cohort.

- Projects

Our ethos of thinking through making is currently manifested in our PG ATA making Charrette module, our UG Mudchute making week (a product of which was included in COP26 exhibition) and in almost all design projects taught in the School. In this endeavour - and other aspects of our teaching - all our students learn from experienced practising architects working alongside leading researchers and academics that together create a lively and contested environment that links studio practice, pedagogy and research. These teams of committed staff are further supported by highly skilled technicians operating in our workshops and on live project sites at home and abroad. Our climate change and social justice agenda aims to educate future leaders in addressing these problems throughout their careers and is built into our curriculum - through a growing focus on decolonisation, social justice and environmental care - as well as in the social networks of the School by safeguarding our staff and students, fostering allyship and creating a diverse community who learn the benefits of working together. For example, our student society MASS recently published a series of essays 'Now What'- completed within the curriculum - related to diversity in architecture and followed this up with a series of online discussions (supported by the university) with experts across the field. Equally, all our students and design units are asked to consider their own carbon footprint as a critical part of their impact upon the climate crisis. Architecture also runs an annual tree planting event open to all staff and students in the university to help raise awareness of this issue. In Critical and Contextual Studies, students undertaking the dissertation choose from a broad range of supervisors with expertise in history, through environment and ecology, de-colonising studies, technology,

craft, political activism, feminism, the commons, and other social issues; and the Professional Criteria have been interpreted in a holistic way across all parts of the School maintaining high standards while maximising the possibilities for diverse approaches to future practice. The Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture, RIBA 3 enjoys a great reputation and students come through recommendations from a wide variety of leading practices/employers with the 'Duty of Care' again central to its ethos based on the premise that the professional knowledge employed - in teams - by good architects is not reducible to 'added value' but is central to the task as a whole.

- Prizes

Our continued commitment to excellence is evident from the number of significant awards recently won by staff, students and alumni - including AJ Small Sustainable Project of the year (David Grandorge, Paloma Gormley and Unit 7, 2020), Stirling Prize (Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley 2019) and most recently, commendations from our UG course in the President's Medals (Bronze and Dissertation 2016, 2018 & 2021) and two winners from MArch in the Jonathan Spiers Student project lighting competition (2019 & 2020).

- Research

Research in the School of AAD is thriving and is led, for the most part, by senior research academics in architecture (including the new head of subject Professor Christian Frost Architecture performed well in REF 2021 submitting over 30 outputs - including design project portfolios by Professor Peter St John, and Professor Mark Brearley and two major impact case studies. We now have established two research centres in the School CUBE (Centre for Urban and Built Ecologies) and CREATURE (Centre for Creative Arts, Cultures and Engagement) both of which are linked directly to the teaching practices, evening lecture series, research training and sharing good practice - including pedagogy - within the subject area.

- The Future

The School of Architecture at London Metropolitan University recognises its location in the city, comprises people who lead, and offers a wide variety of practice, teaching, and research projects. We look forward to continuing to play our part in the future of London, growing our numbers and our reputation as an institution built on an ethos of civic and ecological duties.

10 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 10.1 The School's diverse student population, notably at Part 1, who are committed to the School, its situatedness within the urban context of east London and its socio-ecological agency.
- 10.2 The aspirations of a collaborative, collegiate and socially grounded practice that exists at distinct levels of the School (i.e., students, staff, School leadership, and university).
- 10.3 The integration of professional practice / practitioners into the pedagogic and research environment of the School and across Parts 1, 2 and 3, mutually enhancing students' education and so enabling a professional standard of work, and affording the opportunity for practitioners to refine an architectural praxis.

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** In order to ensure students across all years are prepared for their professional responsibilities regarding RIBA 2030 climate challenge, the School must commit to fostering innovation and avoiding generic solutions, in turn affording synergies across the curriculum and so enabling students' ability to generate complex design proposals.

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 encourages the university/School to generate mechanisms that fully realise the aspirations of a collaborative, collegiate and socially grounded practice and so be enacted synergetically between students, staff, School leadership, and university, including being more evidenced more thoroughly in student work.

- 13.2** The Board recognises the stated ambition of the School to engage with environmental and technical investigations (including through making) but encourages the School to ensure that student design portfolios across all levels fully enable and capture creative exploration, experimentation and innovation to demonstrate clear hierarchies between key stages of design projects and the final synthesis.

- 13.3** The Board recognises the strength of the existing staff community but urges the University to better support staff welfare to ensure a resilient and sustainable workforce and so reinforce student learning.

- 13.4** The Board recognises the University's and School's ambition for diversity and inclusivity for students and staff, but urges the University and School to develop a clearer, achievable plan for the delivery of this agenda through its teaching, allocation of resources, and pastoral care of students and staff.

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.

Part 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met.

Part 3

The Board confirmed that all Part 3 graduate attributes were met.

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.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

BA Hons	(Part 1)	164
MArch	(Part 2)	160
Postgraduate	(Part 3)	88

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 the head of institution
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff