



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA full visiting board
to the Universidad Católica de Colombia
Bogotá**

**Date of virtual visiting board: 26, 27 & 28 July 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 5 February 2024**

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Facultad de Arquitectura
Universidad Católica de Colombia
Bogotá
Colombia

2 Courses offered for validation

Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2

3 Dean:

Dr. Werner Gómez Benítez

Programme Director:

Architect Jorge A. Gutierrez Martinez

4 Awarding body

Universidad Católica de Colombia, Bogotá

5 The visiting board

Sara Shafiei – Chair
Dr Luigi Pintacuda
Dr Athena Moustaka
Paola Salazar – regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, Validation Manager

The Board would like to express its thanks to the translators for their invaluable assistance during the visit.

The Board would also like to express its thanks to Internationalization Coordinator: Graphic Designer Pilar Suescún Monroy

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. The procedures were modified to allow the visit to be conducted online.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

On 5 February 2024 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the following course:

Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2

The next visit to the Universidad Católica de Colombia, Bogotá, 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 or acceptable equivalent 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)

The Faculty of Design and the Architecture program of the Universidad Católica de Colombia carried out a curricular reform process, approved by the MEN (Ministry of National Education) in 2021. It incorporates new core problems (Basic Design, Context, Human Ecology and Professional Qualification) and curricular axes (Design and Culture and Communication) to ensure the relevance, effectiveness and flexibility of the program.

Students are trained to operate in new fields of interest and correlate variables between conceptual and practical components of design, the conditions and specificities of the context and the problems under analysis.

The extended concurrent design promotes the integration, interactivity and effectiveness of problem-based learning. The new curriculum promotes in our students the ability to connect theoretical, practical and cultural activities.

It promotes integrated training (concurrent design) through modularization and the approach to established disciplines of analysis and interpretation of reality. This is in accordance with a problem-based learning modality that emphasizes practical aspects over speculative ones and allows students to specifically contribute to society and to their field of work.

Redefines the program's own information and knowledge packaging systems (core problems and curricular axes) to gain efficiency and reduces the program's duration without losing effectiveness in training.

Graduates stand out for their development of knowledge, attitudes and leadership skills, innovation, creativity, capacity for achievement, entrepreneurship and trans-disciplinary work.

The new curriculum (Plan 8) develops specific action frameworks that guide and coordinate the Architecture program with the training programs provided for in the Faculty's growth plans by setting out binding and coherent starting assumptions with the new disciplinary horizons and the major problems

Mission

Train qualified architects capable of addressing the problems of their area of action within the framework of the social and cultural reality of the context in which they act, and lead innovation processes in line with troubleshooting of an interdisciplinary nature.

Vision

Curriculum, research and disciplinary training, which addresses the object of knowledge in relation to the current development plans of the city, the ten-

year culture plan and the strategic plans of national science and technology programs, specifically in the human and social area in the context of Latin American sciences.

Philosophical Foundation

The Architecture program's philosophical foundation of the Universidad Católica de Colombia includes the principles of the doctrine of Christ, which is deployed in three areas of formative action:

- a) culture, containing and regulating human activity,
- b) the environment as an ethic of conservation and respect, and
- c) the subject as the builder of meaning and source of all sociability.

Epistemological Foundation

The epistemological foundation of the Architecture program at the Universidad Católica de Colombia has a double relationship with knowledge; firstly, an internal reflection of the disciplinary object of architecture as an organized category, and secondly, external knowledge of the diverse interacting knowledge and the cultural context in which it is expressed.

In this sense, links and solidarity are recognized with other areas of knowledge, which are addressed through an interdisciplinary approach, dialogue as privileged forms in the collective construction of knowledge and research as an institutionalized form of stimulating and satisfying curiosity, whereby information is organized and contextualized. In summary, the Architecture Curriculum assumes a double and simultaneous responsibility; first, the defence of traditions and heritage, both tangible and intangible, and second, the recognition of the needs of contemporary society.

Sociological Foundation

The Architecture program of the Universidad Católica de Colombia recognizes culture as the context in which all social phenomena and processes can be described. It implies a scheme of historically transmitted meanings expressed in symbolic forms, languages whereby individuals communicate and develop their knowledge, architecture is understood as a cultural expression of public character, which involves the analysis and interpretation of the various forms of discourse and sociability, raw material in which the processes for the transformation towards an effective democratic and environmentally sustainable society are rooted. Architecture participates in the construction of the concepts of nation and city.

Pedagogical Foundation

The Architecture program of the Universidad Católica de Colombia assumes activities aimed at the development of the individual; these are manifested in the dialogue between peers and conversation as an expression of a non-hierarchical pedagogical relationship. This relationship between teacher and students allows progress towards an investigative process developed in at least three steps: qualified observation, discursive interpretation, and argumentation; these three based on the determination of relevant problems, and organized in core problems and fields of knowledge within the curriculum.

Methodologically, the project is the basic instrument of synthesis deployed in two main activities:

- a) workshop as a collective construction of knowledge, the results circulate through portfolio and logbook, and
- b) the seminar as a staging of speeches and manifestos built autonomously in the theoretical document.

The evaluation is based on agreement on the topics presented in the didactic package. It takes place in a combined evaluation system based on achievements (short term) and competencies (medium and long term).

Psychological foundation

Builds an environment that stimulates the eagerness for knowledge, social commitment and the autonomy of the personal conscience of all the actors involved in the process, within the precepts contained in the institutional PEI.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The board commends the implementation of the concurrent design approach as a valuable tool for enhancing the holistic approach to architecture design and expanding its scope.
- 10.2 The board commends the School for its exceptional efforts in offering a diverse array of pathways and study options, evident in the staff's commitment to providing high levels of support that foster both the personal and professional growth and development of students.

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 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 Board strongly recommends that, in preparation for the next validation board, the School fully engages with all action points from previous validation boards, ensuring close adherence to the requirements of the validation process as set out in the Procedures for Validation, 2021.
- 12.2 The Board strongly recommends an inclusive process of engagement involving all staff and students in the preparation of required documentation for the next validation visit.
- 12.3 The Board draws the School's attention to the requirements to present complete academic portfolios (section 3.5 of the 2021 Validation Procedures). These portfolios must encompass all design and written work completed within the corresponding semester or year, without any editing to final submissions before the visit.
- 12.4 The Board draws the School's attention to the requirement to provide clear and comprehensive demonstrations of how their programme and credit-bearing modules align with the RIBA Themes and Values.

12.5 The Board recommends the School monitor its staffing levels, and adequacy of facilities and physical resources for both teaching and learning, considering the diverse study options, and current and future number of students.

12.6 The Board recommends the School better illustrate their commitments to social values and consciousness in architectural education; emphasising examples of how these values are integrated into projects and designs, fostering their socially responsible approach to 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 While implementing more digital tools and equipment, the Board advises the School to consider how these digital tools could contribute to the development of specific architectural approaches, languages, and communication.

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 Part 1 and 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Programme 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 Part 1 and 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the Programme of Architecture.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

1290 (programme total, all semesters)

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.

- 17.1 Meeting with architecture budget holder and course leaders
- 17.2 Meeting with students
- 17.3 Meeting with external examiners
- 17.4 Meeting with Head of Institution
- 17.5 Meeting with staff