



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to the Universidad de La Salle, Bogotá
Colombia**

**Date of online visiting board: 29 & 30 November, 1 December 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 27 March 2024**

- 1 Details of institution hosting courses**
Facultad de Arquitectura Diseño y Urbanismo FADU
Universidad de La Salle
Cra. 5 #59a-44, Bogotá
Colombia
- 2 Courses offered for validation**
Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2
- 3 Director of the Programme of Architecture**
Arq. Oscar Y Fonseca Roa MSc
- 4 Awarding body**
Universidad de La Salle
- 5 The visiting board**
Kathy Gal, Chair
Matt Hill – Vice Chair
Dr Athena Moustaka
Architect Oscar Alonso Salamanca Ramirez, Regional Representative

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. The procedures were adapted to allow the visit to take place remotely.
- 7 Proposals of the visiting board**
On 27 March 2024 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the following course:

Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2

The next visit to the Universidad de La Salle will take place in 2028. This visit will be in-person.
- 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

La Salle University is among the higher education institutions in Colombia that hold the distinction of High-Quality Institutional Accreditation granted by the Ministry of National Education (MEN hereinafter). In addition, it is the only University outside the European continent certified by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) in terms of Internationalisation. In the most recent QS Stars ranking, a rating system where universities are evaluated comprehensively, La Salle obtained five stars in three categories and four stars in five categories and raised its overall score. This means that the university has the necessary processes and tools in place to provide high-quality experiences for all its students.

The Faculty of Architecture, Design, and Urban Planning (FADU hereafter), formerly known as the Faculty of Habitat Sciences, changed its name in 2022. The FADU is home to seven academic programs, four at the undergraduate level: Architecture, Urbanism, Visual Design, and Industrial Design; and three at the graduate level: Master in Territorial Planning and Management, Master in Experimental Design and Construction, and Master in Latin American Cultural Heritage. As part of the strategic training plan, FADU conducts articulation processes between the programs, allowing students to obtain the title of architect and complete a second undergraduate program in less than 7 years. The Architecture Program is currently accredited by the National Accreditation Council, and it has maintained this high-quality recognition continuously for more than 24 years.

The mission of the Architecture program at La Salle University is to train professionals with a high social, ethical, and political sense that seeks to give priority to the consideration, study, and solution of problems of habitat and built forms related to the problems of our national reality, by stimulating a social, environmental and cultural awareness. Both the Architecture Program, the FADU and the University recognise that they are part of an academic community that learns through research, using scientific and formative methods in all creative processes. Through teaching and learning processes mediated by scientific and formative research, the Architecture Program analyses problems of the national reality related to habitat and proposes solutions aligned with institutional, local, and national policies. Through dialogue with the public, private and productive sectors, the program evaluates the relevance of the proposed solutions.

The vision of the Architecture program is to continue and position itself as a scenario for the training of high-quality professionals. Its graduates will be recognised for their solid academic, research, and social projection foundations, based on the recognition of the historical and cultural process of the country, contributing effectively to the transformation and care of ecological and social structures and contributing to the solution of the major problems of the national habitat and the integral and sustainable human development.

Through various pedagogical strategies in their education, the architecture student acquires the necessary knowledge to tackle academic exercises in urban and rural contexts, [cultivating](#) a deep sense of values, sensitivity, and social responsibility. These pedagogical strategies, in line with the Lasallian

Educational Project (PEUL), prioritise the analysis of territories and communities in situations of vulnerability. Thanks to its flexibility, the academic proposal allows the incorporation of pedagogical strategies that facilitate the participation of student teams in various spaces and projects such as competitions, laboratories, semester academic exchanges, and national and international workshops¹. These experiences are subject to self-assessment and continuous improvement with the aim of strengthening the training, learning, and teaching processes. They have also helped the program to be recognised nationally and internationally in academic competitions and formative research processes.

The Architecture Program adheres to RIBA's yearly academic plan. Part 1 of the academic plan (RIBA classification) comprises 6 semesters, and the second part (RIBA classification) covers the last 4 semesters. Here, it is important to note that the program has two curricula frameworks as a result of the updates made. The first and most recent one, approved by the MEN, corresponds to the Modification framework² and is implemented until semester 7 in cycle II of 2023. The second curricular framework, known as the Resizing grid, was updated in 2016 and is currently implemented in Part 2, covering semesters 8 to 10.

The year-by-year structure, in line with the RIBA proposal, is strengthened by the inclusion of specific questions formulated as research problems for each year of training. These questions guide and bring together the curricular axes defined by the University for its programs, which are called areas: foundational and professional area, research training area, Lasallian training area, and area of disciplinary and interdisciplinary electives.

The first year of education, as outlined in the Modification grid, inquiries and explores basic concepts of spatial composition, considering physical and environmental variables of the natural and built environment. Design proposals are developed that respond to low-complexity architectural needs. In addition, the disciplinary English language of architecture is integrated into the curriculum. This year's academic course contents focus on the history of art, architecture, and design; perception and graphic representation; environment and the city, as well as on buildings, systems, and materials. In this last area, concepts of materiality are explored, and the constituent systems of buildings are studied.

During the second year, as defined in the Modification Framework, emphasis is placed on understanding housing quality as a domestic space that is aligned with the needs and expectations of users and communities to generate design proposals that favour human development. It addresses the analysis of local equipment and its integration with the different scales with which it interacts, such as local, urban, metropolitan, and regional. Academic spaces complement the design workshop exercises by exploring the history and theory of the city, architecture of great cultures, architectural planimetry,

¹ In order to display this experience to the students, a digital repository with the evidence is available <https://inicio.arquitecturaunisallecol.co/>.

² Renewal and modification of the qualifying registration for the Architecture Program through Resolution No. 008228 of 27 May 2020.

and applicable construction and structural systems. This second year also includes the following academic spaces: Disciplinary English III and IV.

In the third year, as established in the Modification grid, social and cultural values present in urban and rural territories are examined. A workshop on social housing is held, a crucial subject in the Colombian context due to the high quantitative and qualitative deficits. Likewise, the cultural heritage workshop is taught, which focuses on valuation techniques and the formulation of projects in heritage environments. Third-year courses cover topics such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), sustainability and comfort, history and theory of architecture in Latin America, as well as networks and construction systems. In addition, the students can select two interdisciplinary electives from the range of courses available at the University.

The fourth and fifth years correspond to the Resizing grid and part 2 of the RIBA classification. In the fourth year, more specific questions are formulated, with a higher level of complexity, aimed at finding solutions to detailed habitat issues. Interventions in urban and rural contexts with a heritage character that promote social development and environmental awareness and are related to local entrepreneurial trends in different territories are valued.

Specifically, in the fifth year, through the final project, the student demonstrates the skills and knowledge acquired during the academic process and proposes habitat interventions based on a research methodology that responds to the context-addressed complexity. The students' proposals are strategically articulated with the FADU's laboratory projects and professional internships in public or private companies, enriched by in-depth theoretical courses.

Graduates from the Architecture Program are recognised as high-quality professionals with a deep social sensitivity who work in different professional, research, or academic fields in private and public sectors in Colombia and other countries. Constant integration with alumni is achieved through the academic offer of graduate programs and participation in the collegiate bodies of the Program, the FADU, and the University.

Finally, the leadership that the Program and the FADU have assumed before private and public entities for the strengthening of training projects, consultancy, awareness-raising, and generation of high humanistic proposals that favour universal accessibility and the acknowledgment of the needs of people with disabilities as manifestations of their deep social commitment.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the University's investment in architecture and its continued engagement with the discipline in response to the 2017 RIBA Visiting Board report.
- 10.2 The Board commends the University's and School's social agenda, their commitment to outreach and their focus on real communities, context, inclusivity and diversity.

10.3 The Board commends the University's and School's commitment to providing opportunity and access to higher education to students from a broad range of backgrounds.

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 review and amend its Academic Position Statement to celebrate its exemplary social agenda. This should be sent to the RIBA before the publication of this report.

12.2. The next Visiting Board in 2028 will expect the programme to be explicitly mapped against the 2021 Themes and Values for Architectural Education and Graduate Attributes (2021 Procedures, section 1.2, page 10).

12.3. For the 2028 in-person visit the School must provide a range of complete academic portfolios as required under the RIBA validation procedures. This is set out in section 3.5, page 36, of the 2021 Procedures for Validation. The portfolios should also be assembled by the staff, and not the students, to ensure that they are comprehensive and contain all the required material.

12.4. For the 2028 visit the School must provide comprehensive marks sheets for each of the years, particularly year 5 (semester 9 and 10). Please see section 3.4, page 35 of the 2021 Procedures document:

The following information must be available in the base room:

- *academic transcripts for each cohort at award levels (i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate cycles) [if applicable]*
- *the transcripts must include marks for all the modules undertaken by a student during an academic year*
- *the transcripts must be arranged high to low, with each student's overall mark an average of their performance across all modules completed in an academic year*
- *the transcripts for those students whose portfolios form part of the sample must be colour coded on the spreadsheet to indicate high/mid/low pass*

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 provide greater clarity regarding the arrangements for and assessment of the internship so that there is evidence of parity in student experience and attainment.

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 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)

Part 1 and 2: 600.

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