

RIBA 

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board  
to 'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture  
and Urbanism, Bucharest - 2022**

**Date of visiting board:** 26,27 & 28 October 2022

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee:** 20 March 2023

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest  
18-20 Academiei Street  
Bucharest – Romania

**2 Courses offered for validation**

Part 1: First 4 years of the Bachelor of Architecture  
Part 2: Final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture

**3 Head of School**

Assoc. Prof. Horia Moldovan – Dean of Faculty of Architecture

**Course Leaders**

Assoc. Prof. Melania Dulămea  
Assoc. Prof. Magdalena Stănculescu  
Assoc. Prof. Celia Ghyka  
Assoc. Prof. Cristina Enache  
Assoc. Prof. Eugen Marinescu  
Lecturer Valerica Potenchi  
Lecturer Ana Maria Mortu

**4 Awarding body**

'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture and Urbanism

**5 The visiting board**

Professor Layton Reid – Chair  
Olive White – Vice Chair  
Jaime Solloso – RIBA – Validation manager  
Daniel Zielinski – Regional Representative

**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**

On the 20 March 2023, the RIBA Educational Committee confirmed that the following course and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

Part 1: First 4 years of the Bachelor of Architecture  
Part 2: Final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture

**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)

### AN OVERVIEW: FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

The Faculty of Architecture of “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest (IMUAU-FA), founded 130 years ago (1892), has been the main educational centre of learning, researching, promotion and dissemination of architecture in Romania. Aiming to promote and provide graduates with solid design ability, technical and aesthetical expertise and wide cultural opening, as well as intellectual and professional skills in order to deal with the complex and challenging contemporary contexts locally or abroad, IMUAU-FA is one of the most important schools of architecture in Eastern-Europe. Bucharest – one of the largest capitals in the region, a city whose development has been historically marked by the meeting between Western and Eastern cultures, with profound changes triggered during the communist period and with problematic developments in the post-communist years – has always had a deep impact on the evolution of architecture education at IMUAU-FA, reflecting to some extent in the adaptation and constant reshaping of the curriculum in general and, in the theoretical topics of debate and design briefs, in particular. Recent successive evaluations by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education- ENQA), involving external examiners, reconfirmed the high level of IMUAU-FA’s architectural education process.

### EDUCATIONAL OFFER

IMUAU-FA’s offers a six-year curriculum (360 ECTS) of architectural studies in Romanian and English – integrated Bachelor and Master Programs. A particular feature of the IMUAU-FA’s education program relies on the perpetuation of the tradition of hand-drawing as an important way of describing, understanding and innovating in architecture. Particularly, the design curriculum connects hand-work abilities to digital skills and technical and technological knowledge. The drawing as an inquiry and research tool evolves from the compulsory faculty admission exam, the “one-day verification project” at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> year, the “one-day sketch” idea concept design through the 2<sup>nd</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> years, to the diploma project defended in front of an international jury. The major transformations that took place in Romanian society after 1990, but also the important international mutations of the last decades, highlighted the need for the training process to respond to new requirements, orienting itself towards an architecture education that responds to the rapid change of values in contemporary culture, sensitive to the extremely rapid progress of information technologies, attentive to the increasing instability of the labour market and the increasingly specialized professional practice, aware of the rapid degradation of the environment and the imperative need of a less energy-consuming and sustainable built environment, sensitive to traditional cultural values and local identity and,

finally, an education that promotes creativity as an expression of the contemporary contribution to the enrichment of the existing built context.

**Learning and research by design.** The design curriculum – the focal point of the curriculum – is split between two departments *Basics of Architectural Design* (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year) and *Synthesis Basics of Architectural Design* (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year) – the equivalent Part 1 and Part 2 involving, in an integrated manner or as a separate set of activities, the particular expertise of the teaching staff of the different specialized didactic departments of the school: *Urbanism and Landscape Design, Interior Design, Architectural Technologies, History and Theory of Architecture and Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. The knowledge acquired by the students in Part 1 and Part 2 evolves from simple to complex, from wide context analysis to concept design, from artistic problem to technical solutions, from learning-assisted to self-analytic, from handwork to computer-based experiences. Every semester, the final project of each design studio is defended in front of an external jury, in order to provide a consistent and objective feedback.

**Elective activities.** Electivity is part of the curriculum: on the one hand, students are encouraged by granting annual credits (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> year) to undertake at their choice extracurricular activities (activities organized by the school's research centre, participation in national and international students' competitions, workshops, summer schools, volunteering in professional related activities, etc.) and, on the other hand, especially at the Master level, by elective activity modules (courses and associated projects) students are encouraged to deepen in one or more directions of the future profession (technology, eco-technology, sustainability and energy efficiency, etc.) or directly related to it (urban design, landscape design, interior design, heritage conservation).

**The Diploma Project.** The Diploma Project is the topmost point of the student learning process. Preliminary theoretical research on a wider topic, contextualizing the project, delivered as an essay – the dissertation – as well as preliminary urban study and the general concept of the future design – pre-diploma – precede the Diploma Project, which is defended in front of an international jury composed of consecrated architects, urban planners and engineers. Part of the international juries are guest professors and professionals from the UK, USA, Canada, France, Argentine, South Korea, Belgium, Holland, Finland, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Hungary, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt etc. The international diploma juries conclude with a general vote for the best projects, in order to select those for The RIBA President Students Medal Awards. The tradition continued online during the pandemic in 2020 and 2022.

Since 2015 IMUAU organized and hosted EAM Best Diploma Projects – an annual European competition that awards excellence in crossing the threshold from education to professional practice. The organizers, the IMUAU together with European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE) and Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) seek to acknowledge the best diploma project in architecture, and to recognize the highest level of design knowledge and skill employed in addressing influential themes of architectural design.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

During the last decade, it has been established a strong and continuous relationship between IMUAU-FA and RIBA, as well as AEEA, Accademia Adrianea, or ACE. Concrete evidence of our shared commitment to architectural education exchanges are the recurring participations in international competitions such as: Unknown - housing as open problem, Laser Valley - Land of Lights, Piranesi Prix de Rome, Archiprix, Solar Decathlon, Solar Decathlon, Isover, 24 hours Ideas Forward, 120 hours, etc. The IMUAU-FA has taken part also in collaborative projects organized by RIBA since 2013. UAUIM maintains collaborative relationships with more than 80 architecture schools in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the USA. The TEMPUS and later SOCRATES/ERASMUS+ programs facilitated student and teaching exchanges with more than 50 architecture schools. Every year, a large number of IMUAU-FA students benefit from international study mobility and internships in design offices in many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America. IMUAU has an active role within the European Association of Schools of Architecture (EAAE) and the International Association for Student Practice Exchanges (IAESTE).

### **PERSPECTIVES**

IMUAU-FA, perpetuating its long tradition and various accumulated experiences, considers on the short and medium term the consolidation and continuation of the integrated training process of future architects, through a curriculum structured around the design studio, open to new challenges determined by climate changes and the direct consequences that arise from this in design practice, heritage protection (extremely pressing in Romania in particular, and in Eastern Europe, in general), rapid technological evolution and the demand and complex dynamics of the internal and international architecture market. In this respect, the close institutional relations with other schools of architecture, with Romanian professional organizations (the Order of Romanian Architects and the Union of Romanian Architects) and international ones, have been and will continue to be cultivated, aiming the synchronization with the realities and requirements of professional practice. Conserving the pragmatic character that, traditionally, the education process at IMUAU-FA had cultivated, the openness to theoretical speculation, to criticism and the use of various cultural resources in the didactic process, will remain a priority. The positive and constructive aspects of the experiences gained during the pandemic, in which the activities were generally carried out online, represented the starting point for new approaches, with a high degree of flexibility, and undeniable benefits in the didactic process. In this respect, IMUAU-FA will continue increasing the quality of teaching performance through the natural integration of use of complex digital means and digitization both in the teaching-learning process and in institutional management.

## **10 Commendations**

- 10.1** The Board commends the School's work in establishing new facilities including the VR Lab, the Craft and the Museum and the dissemination of its practice through publications and exhibitions; including the excellence of drawing produced in the first 2 years of course and the range of project types and sites in year 6.
- 10.2** The Board commends the staff's dedication and work ethic and the provision of support, pastoral care and advice to its students.

- 10.3** The Board commends the schools outstanding efforts to develop access and diversity for students applying to the school and the support that staff receives for external and internal projects.
- 10.4** The Board commends the School for the eminent and diverse range of its External Examiners and the rigorous and collegiate manner of the arrangements for accessing the full range of work for comparison and assessment.
- 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 consider reviewing the academic position statement to better reflect identity, ethos and academic direction of the programme as they further integrate new technologies.
- 12.2** The School should explore the procurement of a Virtual Learning Environment which would contribute to the overall learning experience of the students.
- 12.3** The School should further integrate the RIBA Themes and Values into the curriculum with particular reference to sustainability.
- 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 that a suitable forum be enabled, so that the students and staff voice can be adequately represented in the functioning of the School.
- 13.2** The Board advises that an accessible strategy is considered for the School building. To include the provision of additional support for students seeking accommodation, in order to support a diverse access.
- 13.3** The Board advises that the institution consider the means by which students are informed and are made aware at the commencement of their course of the industry practice elements of the course and how they are prepared for it.
- 13.4** The Board advises that the school should consider the continued development of the aspirations for the student architecture society in terms of improved premises, facilities and free association space.

**13.5** The Board advises that the school should consider the step change on the course between Years 3 and 4 and the management of this important junction in the students' development.

**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 first 4 years of the Bachelor of Architecture and the final 2 years of the Bachelor of Architecture.

**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 Arch (Part 1):1200**  
**M Arch (Part 2): 600**

**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