



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to Azerbaijan University of Architecture
and Construction**

16 & 17 May 2024

**Date of visiting board: 16 & 17 May 2024
Confirmed by the RIBA: 4 September 2024**

1 Details of institution hosting courses
Azerbaijan University of Architecture & Construction
A.Sultanova str., 5. Az-1073
Baku
Azerbaijan

2 Courses offered for validation
Bachelor's programme, Part 1

3 Dean of Faculty
Zahida Mammadova, Phd, Prof.

4 Awarding body
Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction

5 The visiting board
Dr Carl Meddings – Chair
Alida Bata – Vice Chair
Frazer Bufton
Jahangir Sadikhov - Regional representative

In attendance: Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, 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 Board noted that the School has remapped its curriculum and is working towards implementation of Themes and Values. The Board recognises that that schools are in a period of transition and this is reflected in the action points below.

7 Proposals of the visiting board
On 4 September 2024 the RIBA Education and Learning Committee continued validation of the following course:

Bachelor Programme of Architecture.

The next visit to the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction will take place in 2029.

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)

Within the context of the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, the school offers BA programs in architecture (accredited by RIBA), urban planning and Design (preparing for NABA accreditation), as well as a set of professionally accredited MArch programs in the fields of Architecture of Buildings and Structures, Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture, Environmental Design, Restoration and reconstruction of architectural monuments and Sustainable urban planning and regional development (SABAH). The education, experience and well-being of our students are at the core of the operating philosophy of the School. This approach is demonstrated through four key overlapping areas - commitment to tradition and modernity, academic excellence and leadership, collaboration and employability, and diversity.

Commitment to tradition and modernity

The Faculty of Architecture, being the first school of architecture in Azerbaijan with more than 100 years of history and its deep traditions, stands out among other universities in the country where architecture is taught. The Faculty of Architecture was created as a subdivision of the Civil Engineering Faculty of the Azerbaijan Oil Academy. Then he continued his work at the department of the Construction faculty of the Azerbaijan Technical University. Most of our teaching staff are well-known specialists and scientists in the field of architecture, urban planning, and restoration of monuments.

The school offers classical architectural education, preserving its traditions, which it considers necessary for the formation of architects. When entering the University in architecture, in addition to passing the state exam (different for faculties and universities), the student must pass a qualifying exam in order to demonstrate his ability to draw graphic compositions. Great importance is attached to practical classes in art (drawing, painting and sculpture). Also, during the first semester of study, students complete all projects and exercises manually, without the use of computer programs. Also, during the first semester of study, students complete all projects and exercises manually, without the use of computer programs. Only after first semester students allowed to work on a computer using special architectural programs. However, until the end of training, the first sketches in projects are completed manually. WE believe that an architect must be able to demonstrate his knowledge of any field of architecture, initially in the form of a hand sketch, and then use modern computer skills.

Traditionally, the curriculum for the training of architects, in addition to subjects in their specialty, includes subjects that help broaden the horizons of students and complement their education as an architect: history of art, history of architecture, introduction to multiculturalism, etc. We believe that architects should be comprehensively developed specialists. The strength of our architectural school, compared to other architectural schools in the country, is the in-depth study of building structures and technologies (applied mechanics, architectural constructions, architectural physics, materials science, modern construction structures, modern construction technologies, etc.). These subjects develop spatial thinking and an understanding of the

workings of structures in building design, as well as an understanding of the implementation of a construction project. However, as an architecture school, we pay tribute to modern trends and understand the importance of modern technologies in the formation of an architect and offer students subjects that allow them to develop the necessary skills in computer design (information technology, digital modelling).

Academic Excellence and Leadership

The Faculty of Architecture is the oldest school of architecture in the country. The school has the greatest scientific and academic potential in the field of architecture among other architectural schools in Azerbaijan. The school is a collaborative and active channel between research, teaching and practice. The Academic Council for the defence of scientific dissertations in the field of Architecture “Theory and history of architecture, restoration of architectural monuments”, “Architecture of buildings and structures” and “Urban planning, planning of residential areas and landscape architecture” is available only at our school. As the leading architectural school of Azerbaijan, we have extensive connections with industry, design and research institutes and public organizations. We have a high rating on international rating databases and international connections with architectural schools abroad. We are also the only architectural school not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the CIS, which is accredited by RIBA.

However, we strive for continuous academic excellence and strive to maintain our leadership position among schools of architecture. To this end, we are constantly working to develop and implement innovative and exciting training programs, create research centres and laboratories, and improve equipment and studios.

To improve the quality of design and graduation works, we also introduced complex design based on STUDIO principle and developed special requirements for examinations for the subjects based on course works and course projects as well as requirements to the contents of the graduation projects at the architectural faculty. While working on their bachelor's and master's degree theses, students pass several stages of certification. Thus, students have the opportunity to communicate and receive advice not only from their teachers, but also from the commission. In order to improve the quality of education, the University regularly conducts assessments of education by students in the form of anonymous online surveys, as well as internal monitoring and control of the quality of lessons conducted by the quality assurance and monitoring centre. Currently, double diplomas are being carried out with the Polytechnic University of Milan in Design (BA) and Restoration of Architectural Monuments (MA), with the University of Westminster in Restoration of Architectural Monuments (MA). We also plan to implement a double degree with Istanbul Technical University in Architecture (MA).

Opportunities for cooperation and employment

The school maintains mutually beneficial and long-standing relationships with leading design institutes and government agencies. In particular, we cooperate with the Union of Architects of Azerbaijan, State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture; Ministry of Emergencies of Azerbaijan Republic; Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Executive Power of Baku;

Administration of the State Historical and Architectural Reserve "Icherisheher", Institute of Archeology and Ethnography, Architecture and Art at the National Academy of Sciences; Scientific Research Design Institute "Azərbaypa"/ We have close cooperation in the field of science and practice with non-state architectural and design companies continues.

Connections with production are expanding. At the bachelor's level, a 14-week practical training, and at the master's level an 8-week practical training (4 teaching + 4 industrial) in the country's leading design organizations is provided. Also, students of the faculty get acquainted with the construction process. The specialization and composition of coursework and graduation papers are developed in accordance with the requirements of employers (leading design organizations) for university graduates when applying for a job. To make adjustments to the composition and requirements for projects, meetings are regularly held with leading enterprises in the field of architecture and urban planning, and experts from these organizations are invited. Also, external experts are invited to control the quality of coursework and theses at least once a year.

The Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction consistently and actively supports the career opportunities of its students and graduates (including the Faculty of Architecture), and pays special attention to career fairs, organizing 1-2 times a year, as well as participates in various similar events organized by public and private institutions. The main purpose of career fairs is to ensure employment of university graduates, create suitable internship opportunities for our students and ensure their integration into the labour market.

Diversity

The school has a wide range of accredited bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs. There are opportunities to get a second education. Training is conducted in Azerbaijani, Russian and English. Training time is adjusted to students' ability to attend classes. Thus, master's classes begin after 18:00, which allows students to work full-time in production. The school accepts students both from Azerbaijan and abroad. Currently, residents of Azerbaijan, Russia, CIS countries, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, etc. are studying at the school.

Along with preparing for classes, students of the faculty can also spend their leisure time fruitfully and variedly. In addition to the educational process, the school offers students various courses, sports, intellectual and other interest clubs that help unite the student community. Among them are debate clubs, "What? Where? When?" club, the dance ensemble "Buta", Eco-club, young artists club, photo club, music lovers club, football club, volleyball, chess, public speaking club, business club, reading club, arts club, theatre club, etc.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the School for the exemplary and thorough organisation of the visit, in particular the exhibition and student portfolio.
- 10.2 The Board commends the School's outward-looking approach, specifically with regard to its international links.

10.3 The Board commends the School's purposeful leadership and the enthusiasm of the staff and students.

10.4 The Board commends the clear ambition of the School to continuously improve.

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 explore ways in which it can more firmly embed all aspects of sustainability throughout the curriculum, specifically how principles of sustainability are manifest in the architectural projects as outlined in the RIBA's "Themes and Values".

12.2 The Board encourages the School to explore a greater variety of pedagogic processes in architectural projects to avoid standardisation of approach, and to encourage rigour and independent thought.

12.3 The School should explore ways to develop students' capacity for critical analysis and demonstrate critical thinking in the output of taught courses.

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 were impressed by the students' energy, enthusiasm and engagement. The Board believes that there is great potential to further develop student-led activities; this might include architectural projects, trips, talks, speakers and architecture-specific clubs.

13.2 The Board advises the School to develop more opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement, debate and dialogue, within and around the architectural projects, particularly in the final review of each project.

13.3 The Board advises the School to continue explore the unique situation of Azerbaijan, its history, geography, ecology, climatic and cultural diversity to enrich architectural projects and enhance the School's distinctiveness.

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

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Bachelor 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

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

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers

Bachelor Programme of Architecture. Part 1: 850

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