
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to the Chinese University of Hong Kong**

School of Architecture

Date of visiting board: 11/12 May 2015

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 7 October 2015

1 Details of institution hosting courses

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
AIT Building
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong SAR, China

2 Director of the School of Architecture

Professor Nelson Chen, Professor of Practice in Architecture

3 Courses offered for validation

Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) BSSc (AS)
Master of Architecture (MArch)

4 Course leaders

Associate Professor Thomas Chung, Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) BSSc (AS) Part 1
Associate Professor Wallace Chang, Master of Architecture, Part 2

5 Awarding body

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

6 The visiting board

Professor Lorraine Farrelly – Chair
Kathy Gal - Vice chair
Professor Kevin Singh
John Campbell - regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA Validation Manager, was in attendance.

Professor David Gloster, RIBA Director of Education, attended as an observer.

7 Procedures and criteria for the 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.

8 Proposals of the visiting board

At its meeting on 7 [October](#) 2015 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional validation of the following courses, with effect from 1 January 2013:

Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) BSSc (AS), *RIBA part 1*
Master of Architecture (MArch) *RIBA part 2*

The RIBA will undertake a mid-term monitoring visit in 2017 to review the School's response to the action points articulated in section 13 below. It is proposed that the next full visit take place in 2020.

9 Standard requirements for continued recognition

Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

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- 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

**10 Academic position statement
MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

Educational Objectives

A school of architecture in a university represents many things but it is, first and foremost, a place of learning - for open-minded enquiry, innovative explorations and intellectual leadership in the field. At The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the architecture programme is structured not merely to train graduates to join the ranks of the current profession, but to educate our students in being able to adapt to the inevitable changes to be encountered during their careers in the future profession, as well as defining and formulating it with leadership.

To design buildings as future architects, our students are exposed to the integration of design, research and practice while developing a broad range of knowledge and skills in diverse areas such as design methodology and practice; building technology and sustainable design; digital technology and computational design; history, culture and conservation design; urban design and landscape urbanism; as well as appreciation of the cultural and intellectual meaning of architecture as the most permanent and visible embodiment of civilization.

Academic Context - The University and the Faculty in which the programme is offered

The School of Architecture is housed within the Faculty of Social Science at the University. This sets the School within a strong humanist context where architecture is seen within the broad human culture and history, and the local and regional conditions of Hong Kong. It also allows the School to explore collaborative relationships in teaching and research with other departments of the Faculty.

Other disciplines in social sciences as well as fine arts are important adjunct subjects of study in the programme. The entire University is a place of study where the academic regulations as well as the system of Colleges encourage and cultivate broad intellectual attitudes. With the conversion to a 4-year undergraduate curriculum in 2012, there has been increased emphasis on general education and language enhancement to facilitate broader exposure.

Student Body - How the students may contribute and evaluate the programme from curricular to administrative matters

The students have an open channel of communication with the School through contact with all teaching members of the School, including the Director, and staff members of the general office. In addition, the Architectural Society student organization leads student activities and maintains formal contact with the School through membership in the School Board. The students provide feedback on all courses through a University-wide system of course evaluation at the end of each course. The results of the Course Teaching Evaluations are examined by the Director and form a part of the background information to discussions on curriculum development, personnel matters such as reappointment and promotion, and other relevant matters. A Student Forum is organized annually so that all students can have

direct access and public dialogue with the Director and teaching staff on wide-ranging issues. In addition, informal meetings with the Director are held throughout the year.

Accreditation - The objectives for Professional Accreditation of the programmes in architecture

The programme is designed to provide a basis for education in general and preparation for professional work as an architect in particular. Our students are encouraged to enrich their core of studies in architecture by exploring lateral relationships with other subjects and disciplines as well as through independent study and experience of other cultures.

The School offers two programmes in architecture. The pre-professional programme is a four-year Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) degree programme. The professional degree programme lasts for two years leading to the Master of Architecture degree. In between, students typically take a year-out work experience in local architectural practices.

In addition, the School currently offers three Taught Postgraduate (TPg) programmes leading to MSc degrees in Urban Design; Sustainable and Environmental Design; and Architectural Conservation and Design, as well as Research Postgraduate (RPg) programmes leading to MPhil and PhD degrees focusing on one of the main subject areas such as history and theory, computational design and sustainable design, etc.

For the BSSc (-AS) programme, the core studies consist of design studios in addition to courses in four broad subject areas. Studios are designed to progress from skill acquisition starting in Year Two, to the integration of design exposures to specific knowledge gained in lecture courses, and finally to the overall synthesis of many design issues in solving architectural problems. The scale and complexity of design projects increase from Year Two to Year Four, and the teaching method progresses from more structured learning to one that allows the students to define more of their own parameters. Required and elective courses are offered in Humanities, Technology, Design Computation, and Professional Practice.

For the MArch programme, design studios are offered addressing a wide variety of architectural issues. These studios are smaller in student numbers and focused in pedagogy. The professional courses are designed to connect design thinking to real life professional experience. In addition, many elective courses are offered to enhance knowledge and research in these fields, as well as linking them with the design studios.

Profession - Involvement of the profession in shaping and participating in the programme

The School regards the contributions of the profession as an essential and effective means of maintaining high standards and ensuring open access for the students to the members of the profession. In order to achieve this, the School seeks actively to involve members of the profession in teaching design studios, as well as teaching courses in areas such as professional practice and building technology. In addition, the School has implemented a system of external reviews by a panel of leading architects from Hong Kong and internationally at the end of each term. These reviews offer opportunities to confirm the educational objectives of the design studios and for discussion on pedagogical issues with individual design teachers.

Society - The impact and relation of the programme to society

The School maintains extensive contact with our society through involvement of individual members in public workshops concerned with the shaping of architecture and urban fabric of Hong Kong; cooperation with government bodies such as Development Bureau, Architectural Services Department, Buildings Department, Town Planning Board, Antiquities and

Monuments Office, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Urban Renewal Authority and Hong Kong Housing Authority; community groups such as Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden Corporation; the private sector such as the Mass Transit Railway Corporation, China Light and Power Co; and several other local community groups.

The School receives generous donations from leading architectural practices and property developers as well as other organizations and individuals to support our students for design awards and travel scholarships. Our students participate in local and international design competitions that have positive influence in our society. For example, this year alone, CUHK architecture students have won design competitions, for the Times Square Living Room Museum (an exhibition pavilion now built in the open plaza of Times Square) and the Disney ImagiNations design (for a new attraction at Hong Kong Disneyland) among several other notable successes.

11 Commendations

The Board commends the School on creating a distinctive environment for students, where there is a positive working relationship between faculty and students. The staff team support the students through both formal and informal working relationships across design studio and taught courses. The physical environment of the 24 hour studio and associated library, is an important characteristic of the shared space and social centre of the School. This encourages a vibrant active studio culture, where students participate in a supportive network of peer learning.

12 Conditions

There are no conditions.

13 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 midterm monitoring visits. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

13.1 The School should undertake a full, formal mapping of the BSSc Architecture and MArch courses against the current RIBA validation criteria (2011, current revision) evidencing where each unit (academic module) of the courses meet these criteria.

13.2 The School should develop a formal process where the academic staff can annually review and revise curricula of the BSSc Architecture and MArch courses holistically against the RIBA validation criteria.

13.3 A full academic portfolio (see section 4.7, p34 of the current Validation Procedures), including design work, all written work, all examination scripts and other assessed artefacts of each individual student selected for the required sample of work presented to all subsequent RIBA visits should be retained for the panel.

13.4 The design process, including concept sketches, analysis and development models should be recorded and evidenced in all students' academic portfolios.

- 13.5 There should be a regular review of physical resources in the School and a strategy developed and implemented with staff and students about ways to deal with current space pressures to ensure the curricula can be adequately delivered.
- 13.6 The overall documentation presented for validation should comply with the requirements of the RIBA Procedures (sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).
- 13.7 The development of an explicit position statement offering a more cohesive vision for the School is necessary. In particular, the potential of the Design Research Units at MArch level needs to be given more thematic direction and autonomy to inform the curricula and student experience at both UG and PG levels in the very particular context of Hong Kong and mainland China.

BSSc (AS) Part 1

- 13.8 A pedagogical strategy needs to be further developed and implemented to ensure that students engage in an integrated design project, evidencing understanding and application of structural, sustainable and environmental systems design. Students should, in addition, understand how to develop a relevant design brief. This must be clearly evidenced in the academic portfolio (GC1.2, GC7.2, GC7.3).
- 13.9 To ensure students have a relevant understanding of professional practice issues, the design project needs to demonstrate understanding of a range of issues including inclusive design, cost analysis and local building legislation. (GC10.1, GC10.2, GC10.3, GC11.2, GC11.3).

MArch Part 2

- 13.10 A pedagogical strategy needs to be further developed and implemented to ensure that students engage in an integrated design project, evidencing understanding and application of structural, sustainable and environmental systems design. This must be clearly evidenced in the academic portfolio (GC1.2, GC9.3).
- 13.11 To ensure students have a relevant understanding of professional practice issues, the design project needs to demonstrate understanding of a range of issues including inclusive design, cost control and local building legislation (GC10.1 and GC10.2).
- 13.12 The Masters course is to have a piece of extended writing (dissertation) at a masters level of study to encourage students to develop appropriate critical writing skills (Graduate Attribute GA2.4).

14. 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.

- 14.1 There is no additional advice.

15 Delivery of academic position

The following key points were noted:

15.1 Action point 13.7 refers.

16 Delivery of graduate attributes

16.1 Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) BSSc (AS)

The Board was content that all graduate attributes for Part 1 were met.

16.2 Master of Architecture (MArch)

GA2.4 critical understanding of how knowledge is advanced through research to produce clear, logically argued and original written work relating to architectural culture, theory and design

Advice point 13.2 refers.

17 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.

GC1 Ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements

GC1 The graduate will have the ability to:

.2 understand the constructional and structural systems, the environmental strategies and the regulatory requirements that apply to the design and construction of a comprehensive design project;

Action point 13.8 refers.

Action point 13.10 refers.

GC7 Understanding of the methods of investigation and preparation of the brief for a design project

GC7 The graduate will have an understanding of:

.2 the need to appraise and prepare building briefs of diverse scales and types, to define client and user requirements and their appropriateness to site and context;

Action point 13.8 refers (I've presumed the Board meant GC7.2 and GC7.3).

.3 the contributions of architects and co-professionals to the formulation of the brief, and the methods of investigation used in its preparation.

Action point 13.8 refers.

GC9 Adequate knowledge of physical problems and technologies and the function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate

GC9 The graduate will have knowledge of:

- .3 strategies for building services, and ability to integrate these in a design project.

Action point 13.0 refers.

GC10 The necessary design skills to meet building users' requirements within the constraints imposed by cost factors and building regulations

GC10 The graduate will have the skills to:

- .1 critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, constructional systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design;

Action point 13.9 refers.

Action point 13.10 refers.

- .2 understand the cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project;

Action point 13.9 refers.

Action point 13.10 refers.

- .3 prepare designs that will meet building users' requirements and comply with UK legislation, appropriate performance standards and health and safety requirements.

Action point 13.9 refers.

GC11 Adequate knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall planning

GC11 The graduate will have knowledge of:

- .2 the professional inter-relationships of individuals and organisations involved in procuring and delivering architectural projects, and how these are defined through contractual and organisational structures;

Action point 13.9 refers.

- .3 the basic management theories and business principles related to running both an architects' practice and architectural projects, recognising current and emerging trends in the construction industry.

Action point 13.9 refers.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

Bachelor of Social Science (Architectural Studies) BSSc (AS) - 205
Master of Architecture (MArch) - 118

18.2 Documentation provided

Action points 13.1, 13.3, 13.4 and 13.6 refer.

19. Notes of meetings

These notes of the following meetings are available on request. The full set of notes will be issued to the mid-term panel and the next full visiting board.

- Budget holder and course leader meeting
- Student meeting
- Head of institution
- External reviewers
- Staff