
Royal Institute of British Architects

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

Faculty of Architecture

Date of visiting board: 14/15 May 2015

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 7 October 2015

- 1 Details of institution hosting courses**
Department of Architecture
Faculty of Architecture
The University of Hong Kong
Knowles Building,
HKU, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
- 2 Head of Department & Professor:**
Wang, Wei Jen
- 3 Courses offered for validation**
Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies, 4 years
Master of Architecture, 2 years
- 4 Course leaders**
Mr Joshua Bolchover, Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies (BAAS) Program
Director
Mr Jason Carlow, Master of Architecture (MArch) programme director
- 5 Awarding body**
The University of Hong Kong
- 6 The visiting board**
Professor Lorraine Farrelly – Chair
Kathy Gal - Vice Chair
Professor Kevin Singh
Mr Alfred Yeung - regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA Validation Manager attended.

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 that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally validated with effect from 1 January 2013:

Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies (BAAS), 4 years
Master of Architecture (MArch), 2 years

The next full visit will take place in 2022. The RIBA will also conduct a mid-term visit at a date to be agreed mutually by the RIBA and HKU.

9 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 institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

10 Academic position statement (written by the School)

Our Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies (BAAS) program establishes a solid foundation for our undergraduate students with a clear pedagogical sequence rooted in questions of scale, materiality, locality, function, event, structure, the environment, history, and society. Our second year's focus on the architectural forms and spaces of the village gives way to third-year issues of urbanism – the relationship between architecture and the city -- in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Our final fourth year's capstone studio project explores housing in high-density urban conditions.

The Master of Architecture (MArch) program is also committed to addressing key contemporary issues of architectural design and urbanism. Invited leading architects and scholars from around the world work alongside our own faculty in examining these topics. Our MArch 2 students complete their studies through thesis projects that offer opportunities to expand their independent and critical thinking skills and develop deeper, more multidisciplinary perspective on the process of design. The topics exhibited in our 2014 thesis projects range from the visionary to the practical and embody the diversity of the program itself.

We are committed to making our MPhil/ PhD program an integral part of our shared, cumulative approach to the study of architecture and urbanism. We also believe in the reciprocal relationship between architectural research and design. In an effort to forge stronger ties between teaching and research as well as design and knowledge exchange, we foster a series of interactive programs including workshops, field studies, and a variety of different forms of community engagement that bring together students and teachers from different degree programs and disciplinary specialties.

We consider our public lecture series an extension of in-class learning for all of our students. Our public lecture series thematic titles have included "Project/Projecting," "Local/Locus," "Tectonics/Technology," and "Sustain/Support." Each succinctly captures critical issues at stake in architectural design and discourse today. Departmental symposia ranging from "Housing China" to "Concrete Matters" have also sought to engage both students and faculty in discussion over key typological and material questions at work in contemporary design.

We believe in the capacity of architecture for improving the human condition in relationship to the natural environment. We are committed to developing excellence within our student body as well as our faculty. We are engaging with communities in Hong Kong and mainland

China in an effort to both enrich our own pre-existing understanding of these areas while sharing our expertise to help improve architectural design strategies and our living environment.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The Board commends the Department on the clear vision and aspirations that were effectively described in the Academic Position Statements. The School offers research-informed programmes which are clearly focussed and provide a platform to explore the regional context around both the urban and the human condition.
- 11.2 The Board commends the Department for implementing its clear educational philosophy through comprehensive and coherent design of its programmes that enrich the student journey from first year BAAS through to the MArch course of study. It further commends the range of options provided and the elective courses offering a rich and diverse set of choices that inform architectural design and future practice.

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. 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 continue to evaluate and evolve the diverse elective content and consider how this can inform the core curriculum to enhance delivery of the RIBA Part 1 and Part 2 validation criteria at BAAS and MArch respectively.
- 13.2 The Board appreciated the evidence provided for the present visit, particularly given the short preparation time. For future visits the overall documentation presented for validation must comply with the requirements of the RIBA Procedures (sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies (BAAS)

- 13.3 For the BAAS, while there is evidence of teaching of environmental strategies, environmental impact of specification choice, and strategies for building services, these need to be more clearly evidenced through application in the studio design projects (GC1.2, GC8.3, GC9.3), perhaps by lengthening the thesis project.
- 13.4 The BAAS course needs to demonstrate more clearly how students examine financial factors in varying building types and understand cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project (GC10.1 and GC10.2).
- 13.5 For the BAAS course the area of knowledge of the fine arts and influence on architectural design needs to be more explicit in the academic portfolio (GC3).

Master of Architecture, MArch

- 13.6 For the MArch course there should be 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).
- 13.7 For the MArch, while there is evidence of teaching of environmental strategies, environmental impact of specification choices, materials and strategies for building services, these need to be more clearly evidenced through application in the thesis design project (GC5.2, GC8.3, GC9.1, GC9.2 and GC9.3).
- 13.8 The MArch course needs to demonstrate more clearly how students examine financial factors in varying building types and understand cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project (GC10.1 and GC10.2).
- 13.9 For the MArch course the area of knowledge of the fine arts and influence on architectural design needs to be more explicit in the academic portfolio (GC3).

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 The Board advises that the Department continue to develop opportunities for students to undertake exchange programmes and make available more places if possible.
- 14.2 The Board advises that the School consider how to support students in their year out, perhaps using the University Academic Advisor system.
- 14.3 The Board advises the University to consider if it may be possible to invite the international external examiner to visit, alongside the regional external examiner, on an annual basis, to help the School to develop the course quality and offer an international perspective.
- 14.4 As the School evolves, the Board advises that space and other resources are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet curricular requirements.
- 14.5 The Board advises that the School continue to identify opportunities for the BAAS students to benefit from the rich, diverse range of staff research activities through connecting this to taught curricula where possible.

15 Delivery of academic position

The following key points were noted:

The ambition of the School and courses is well connected to the local culture and key issues related to Hong Kong, but also mainland China.

This is clearly described in the Position statement. The Public Lecture series and the Research programme that staff have developed has impact in the University, but also in regional and international context, this impact should also be acknowledged within the position statement

16 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.

- 16.1 The Board was content that the Part 1 Graduate Attributes were met by the Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies
- 16.2 While the Board was content that the majority of Part 2 Graduate Attributes were met by the Master of Architecture (M.Arch), please see action point 13.6 in reference to GA2.4:
- 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

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:

GC1.2 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;

Please refer to Action Point 13.3.

GC3 Knowledge of the fine arts as an influence on the quality of architectural design

GC3 The graduate will have knowledge of:

- .1 how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design;
- .2 the creative application of the fine arts and their relevance and impact on architecture;
- .3 the creative application of such work to studio design projects, in terms of their conceptualisation and representation.

Please refer to Action Points 13.5 and 13.9.

GC5 Understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings and the spaces between them to human needs and scale

GC5 The graduate will have an understanding of:

GC5.2 the impact of buildings on the environment, and the precepts of sustainable design;

Please refer to Action Point 13.7.

GC8 Understanding of the structural design, constructional and engineering problems associated with building design

GC8 The graduate will have an understanding of:

GC8.3 the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, components and systems, and the environmental impact of specification choices.

Please refer to Action Points 13.3 and 13.7.

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:

GC9.1 principles associated with designing optimum visual, thermal and acoustic environments;

Please refer to Action Point 13.7.

GC9.3 strategies for building services, and ability to integrate these in a design project.

Please refer to Action Points 13.3 and 13.7.

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:

GC10.1 critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, constructional systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design;

Please refer to Action Points 13.4 and 13.8.

GC10.2 understand the cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project;

Please refer to Action Points 13.4 and 13.8.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

BAAS 258

MArch 158

Total 416

18.2 Documentation provided

While the School provided sufficient documentation at short notice, documentation, please refer to action point. 13.2.

19. 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 the Dean of the Faculty and Head of Department
- Student meeting
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) meeting
- Meeting with staff