
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to The City School of Architecture**

**Date of visiting board: 7 & 8 March 2016
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 1 June 2016**

1 Details of institution hosting course/s **(report part A)**

City School of Architecture
No 104, Kithulwatte Road,
Colombo 8
Sri Lanka

2 Head of Architecture Group

Professor Lal Balasuriya

3 Course/s offered for revalidation

City School of Architecture Part I course* (3 years); RIBA Part One
City School of Architecture Part II course* (3 years); RIBA Part Two

4 Course leaders

Archt. Nandika Denipitiya Part I
Archt. Surangi Gunawardena Part II

5 Awarding body

City School of Architecture

6 The visiting board

Ruth Reed	Chair
Bob Brown	Vice Chair
Lilly Kudic	
Harbinder Birdi	
Archt. Mano Ponniya	Regional representative
Sophie Bailey	RIBA Validation Manager

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

On 1 June 2016 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated.

City School of Architecture Part I course RIBA Part One
City School of Architecture Part II course RIBA Part Two

The next visiting board will take place in 2021.

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
(Statement written by the school)

A journey from a unique legacy to a practice oriented academic programme

The City School of Architecture (CSA) has a unique legacy in the history of Sri Lankan architecture. Started as an architectural education course thirty years ago, by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA), it was firmly grounded in a practical learn while you work model. The course has since become a professionally organised programme, while still maintaining its founding ethos. As such, CSA maintains close links between students and practicing local architects. An approach also validated by our graduates promptly securing employment, with many setting up their own practices, employing others and embarking on diverse professional careers. Their capacity is amply demonstrated by the notable work of CSA Alumni.

Training a competent and responsible architect entails grappling with sustainability and equity. The economic, social and environmental sustainability in Sri Lanka's rapidly urbanising regions and its diverse rural heritage forms an integral part of the schools' educational programmes. Special emphasis is given to projects inspired by Sri Lanka's rich vernacular traditions, exploring wider usage of passive systems – opening student minds to design truths they are surrounded by, yet unaware of; providing understanding of not only heritage but also of environmental stewardship. The contextual approach when initiating architectural design projects is a key factor to achieving this objective. At Part II level, socially equitable designs are considered indispensable. These projects train students to pragmatically address actual national needs and regional issues in rapidly urbanising South Asia. The school promotes live studio projects in this realm, with field studies and multiple collaborators.

Strengthening CSA's academic capacity, since receiving RIBA accreditation, CSA partnered with the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol, commencing degree programmes from 2011. CSA's emphasis on environmentally responsible design led to UWE's recognition of Part II as a MArch in Architecture and Environmental Design.

The Management is also dedicated to expanding facilities at CSA. The move to a centrally located spacious premises in August 2015, created an environment more conducive to architectural academic work. The

unique neighbourhood is also a serendipitous daily reminder to all at CSA of the realities of living and building in our countries.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the teaching and learning at CSA follows a trajectory formed by its evolution, and a conscious choice to develop pragmatic and creative architects able to engage with future uncertainties and inequities, capable of designing to nurture a society facing fast paced changes, be they climate or technology induced. The distinguishing foci of the CSA programmes emphasise a practice oriented, environmentally conscious and academically rigorous teaching and learning process.

Design is conducted via an interactive Design Studio as the core subject, as with most architectural programmes. However at CSA Design is also an integral part of practical training. Initially structured with approximately a fifty: fifty ratio of academic to practical training, now Part I, as a full time programme, has increased the design component of the academic training. The Practical Training component in Part I is gained during the Internship. The Part II programme, being part time still has practical training as a major component, of which up to fifty percent (50%) contributes to Design as seen in Table 1. This provides students the opportunity to develop the distinctive practical design skills CSA is known for.

The Syllabi are based on SLIA's Board of Architectural Education Curriculum (ref SLIA curriculum for Parts 1, 2 and 3) containing Design and Architectural Studies, History, Theory, Society and Culture, Technology, Environment and Professional Practice, as seen in Table 1 below.

In Part I, Design is taught through set design projects, mapped to theoretical competencies, focusing on skills, tectonics, craft and profession of architecture, and application of creative design at an appropriate theoretical complexity. In 2011 the Part I course changed from part time to full time (latter shown in Table 1).

In Part II, Design guides students through critical inquiry, philosophical approach and experimentation through complex projects supported by specialists from urban design, community architecture, conservation and heritage management, environmental sustainability and design of tall buildings, leading to the self-formulated final year Comprehensive Design Project and dissertation.

The course provides students skill development opportunities relevant to a modern practice principally through course work, site and lab visits coordinated across Part I and II and integrated into each levels design studio. Practical training during the internship and during the Part II, allows monitored office experience, reinforcing thinking and design skills to enable students to easily fit into the professional practice environment.

In addition, CSA provides opportunities for local and foreign study tours for experiencing architecture, joint studio programmes with visiting foreign university students, participating in local and foreign student

conventions, fora and design competitions. Student interaction between CSA and University of Moratuwa are facilitated by the SLIA, aimed at creating a more integrated professional environment within Sri Lanka.

CSA, aspires to be a leading school of architecture in the South Asian Region educating and training architects to build creatively and responsibly. The schools' mission remains, to train students as professionally qualified Architects with competitive and comprehensive knowledge of the discipline, able to adapt to the real and contemporary trends and needs, being ethically and professionally competent and socially and environmentally responsible.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the evident depth of enquiry and demonstration of understanding of technical design and building construction at all levels.
- 11.2 The board commends the investment in a new building that provides the opportunities for greater interaction between the student cohorts (a.k.a. batches) and more exploration of 3 dimensional design development and presentation.
- 11.3 The board commends the ambition of the School to develop the academic including the theoretical exploration of architecture and staff research.
- 11.4 The board commends the community spirit of the School particularly between the different years within the School and the support provided by the professional architectural community.

12 Conditions

There are no conditions.

13 Action points

The visiting board proposes the following action points. The RIBA expects the school to report on how it will address these action points. The school is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid term monitoring visits. Failure by the school to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 13.1 The board commends the move towards a more theoretical approach to design in the full time course at Part I. The School should give greater weight to the demonstration of design proposals at the current boundaries of professional practice and the academic discipline of architecture at this level. This should include the application of appropriate theoretical concepts to studio design projects, demonstrating a reflective and critical approach (GC2).
- 13.2 The board welcomes the breadth of enquiry and integration of the technical curriculum requirements in the projects at Part II, however the School should consider the introduction of exploratory design projects

in the first or second year of the Part II. This is to both set a higher level of design aspiration from that of the Part I, and to enable an ability to test new hypotheses and speculations in all three years of the Part II (GA2.1)

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 welcomes the greater emphasis on building projects rather than urban design since the last visit and advises that the School should encourage greater clarity in the demonstration of the integration of these projects into the urban context and/or landscape.
- 14.2 The board welcomes the opportunities afforded by the new building and suggest that the School utilises this to encourage the use of a wider range of communication methods and media to present design proposals; building on the exploration of design and representational methods pursued in the first year of the course.
- 14.3 The board recommends that greater consideration be given to the engagement of students in the formulation of design briefs before the final year of Part II to enable the transition to the final year. This preparation should include the critical review of relevant precedents and the consideration of the development of briefs of diverse scale and types.
- 14.4 The board advises that more weight be given to design development and methodology, and the demonstration of this within the design portfolio throughout the School.

15 Delivery of academic position

The following key points were noted:
There is a good emphasis on the local culture, social activities and aims. The board commented that in the future, it would be useful to include information surrounding the relationship and synergies between the part one and part two courses.

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.

Graduate Attributes for Parts 1 and 2

The board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Programme of Architecture.

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.

Graduate Criteria for Parts 1 and 2

The board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate criteria were met by graduates of the Programme of Architecture.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

Student numbers at the time of the RIBA visit in March 2016.

CSA PART I COURSE Student cohorts:

Total in Year 1	:	31
Total in Year 2	:	45
Total in Year 3	:	38

CSA PART II COURSE Student cohorts

Total in Year 1	:	14
Total in Year 2	:	21
Total in Year 3	:	22

TOTAL in school : 171

18.2 Documentation provided

The Department provided all advance documentation in accordance with the validation procedures.

19 Notes of meetings

***Notes of meetings**

On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings:

- **Budget holder and course leaders**
- **Students**
- **Head of institution**
- **External examiners**
- **Staff**