
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to
'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture &
Urbansim**

**Date of visiting board: 25-26 October 2017
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 09 February 2018**

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**
 'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture & Urbansim
 str. Academiei No 18-20
 010014 Bucharest
 Romania
- 2 Head of Architecture Group**
 Georgică Mitrache Dean of Faculty
- 3 Course/s offered for validation**
 Integrated Bachelor's and Master's degree programme (6 years), for Part 1 and 2 on completion of the programme
- 4 Course leader/s**

DESIGN STUDIO
 design studio 1st year conf.dr. arch. Mihai Ene
 design studio 2nd, 3rd year prof. dr. arch. Adrian Spirescu
 design studio 4th, 5th year prof. conf. dr arch. Magda Stanculescu
 TECHNICAL SCIENCES conf.dr.arch. Zina Macri
 HISTORY & THEORY conf. dr. arch. Mihaela Criticos
 URBANISM conf.dr.arch. Cristina Enache
 STUDY OF FORM conf. dr.arch. Doina Niculae
- 5 Awarding body**
 'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture & Urbansim
- 6 The visiting board**

Sally Stewart	chair
Ben Cowd	vice chair
Jane McAllister	academic
Virginia Rammou	academic
Vladimir Arsene	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 Recommendation of the Visiting Board**
 On the 09 February 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

Integrated Bachelor's and Master's degree programme (6 years), for Part 1 and 2 on completion of the programme

The next RIBA visiting board will take place in: 2022

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

"Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism (IMUAAU) is the main Romanian university in the field of architecture and urbanism. The University derives its prestige from its long-established experience in architectural teaching and research, being the oldest University of its kind in the country (it was founded in 1892). Consequently, one of the strong points of our institution is its capacity to adjust and move on dynamically in an every changing social, cultural and educational context. This is a skill that we pass on to our students. Adaptability and flexibility are some of the most important tools in contemporary architectural practice, therefore, the Faculty of Architecture makes no exception and aims to provide its graduates with both technical and theoretical skills within an integrative curriculum. Our graduates become architects able to offer valuable new viewpoints for the global architectural practice. In this sense, we take pride in the world-wide activity of our former graduates who challenge the boundaries and perspectives of contemporary architecture.

Our Faculty is permanently in contact with the challenges of the profession and understands that a dynamic and integrative curriculum is the key to forming competitive and socially engaged architects. Our approach is a balancing act between developing an increasingly diverse array of courses within a generalist approach (technical as well as theoretical). Our students develop a wide range of skills and, at the same time, enhance their individuality. The integrated Bachelor and Master system is the best formula to achieve the aim of offering our students continual and progressively complex information, context, problems, projects. The Design Studio focuses on such targets. There is also a permanent exchange of information with the other departments integrated in the design process: Technological Sciences, Architectural History and Theory, Heritage & Conservation, Urban Planning & Design, Study of Form & Ambience.

The Faculty's identity thrives on a strong sense of tradition complemented by a perspective to the future of architectural practice. In this respect, it promotes the use of hand drawing as an important tool in describing and understanding the world; at the same time the curriculum connects the hand crafting abilities to digital skills and technical knowledge. There is a compulsory hand drawing test for the admission examination, underlying students' selection process. Hand

drawing is permanently developed throughout the first year and with the final year verification projects. Between the 2nd and 5th years there are 6 “one-day sketches” requiring are hand drawn. Equally, students develop skills which are relevant for the contemporary and future practice through current applications of computer technology in architectural design. This encourages students to express their individuality by graphical means in their project presentations.

From the 1st through the 6th year, the curriculum becomes more complex and challenging with a view to develop skills corresponding to RIBA Part 1 and RIBA Part 2, respectively. The knowledge acquired by students progresses from reality analysis to concept design, from artistic to technical, from didactic to self-analytic, from manual to digital ending up with a final Diploma Project.

The Faculty focuses on the valuable teaching and learning exchanges that take place in the design studio; this kind of activity covers more than 50% of the curriculum. The first-year design studio consists in an Introduction into the Architectural Design which helps students observe, understand and represent the architectural space and its organisation, structure and material qualities. Basis of Architectural Design covers the 2nd and 3rd years and focuses on the position of architecture within the urban context and the influence of the social, economic and cultural framework, helping students develop their technical and theoretical skills involved in such projects. Synthesis of Architectural Design covers the 4th and 5th years and focuses on the ability to tackle the spatial-functional mix in complex projects, as well as to gain a critical point of view concerning the historical, cultural, social and technological built environment integrating, at the same time, elements of performant structures and aspects of sustainability.

The 6th year includes the elaboration of the Diploma Project, which is the climax of students’ development within the academic learning environment. The Diploma Project is preceded by an essay concerning the topic of the dissertation, as well as a preliminary study of the site’s context: Pre-Diploma. The main aim of the Diploma is to validate the Master level performance criteria and to prepare undergraduates for the transition to the next stages of their profession. The validation of the Diploma Project is done by an international jury composed of specialists in architecture, urbanism and engineering. This allows for opening up to different points of view and feedback from professionals from other universities and cultures, which translates in getting to know new ideas and challenges.

In order to prepare our undergraduates for the challenges of the contemporary architectural practice, the curriculum includes a period of practice each year, which grows in complexity from the 1st through the 6th year and which corresponds the respective teaching level of complexity.

The 1st-year practice helps students have their first contact with the urban space and develop tools to analyse and properly represent the architectural space. In the 2nd year of practice students investigate the historical and architectural value of heritage. The 3rd of practice focuses on the more pragmatic challenges of the construction sites and

the materialisation of the architectural project into built reality. The 4th year integrates the connection between contemporary and the historical built environment. The 5th year of practice follows a more in-depth approach of the interventions on heritage. The 6th year practice is the most complex one and the longest - with a minimum of 12 weeks - and it requires undergraduates to actively participate into the design process of an architectural office, of their own choice. The Faculty acts as an intermediary between the student and the future employers by maintaining a close connection with both parties, both locally and internationally.

The performance of our educational process is also related to the Faculty's openness to students' experience exchange and mobility as well as to the development of our students' engagement in all aspects and activities in the Faculty's administration.

Our students are involved in the ERASMUS programme, professional internships in offices and the IAESTE international exchange of professional practice. The integrated Master Degree Programme provides for student's mobility between the 2nd and the final year of study. Our students are offered the chance to study abroad in one of the 50 partner universities from Europe, acquiring new academic and professional competences, necessary for building up a solid career in the field of architecture. SEE Mobility Projects for students and staff have been in place since 2009 and continue on the basis of inter-institutional agreements between the IMUAU and European partner universities, being based on offers from Norway, Island and Lichtenstein. Between 2012 and 2017, 240 students from the IMUAU benefited from the IAESTE exchange programme. Moreover, we take pride in the participation of students from all around the world in our programme, and the introduction of the programmed taught in English has highly contributed to an increasing interest of foreign students.

Also, since 2015 our university has organized and hosted the EAM Best Diploma Projects - an annual European competition that awards diplomas of excellence in architectural education. 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. In 2016, 120 diploma projects, from 29 countries were registered for the competition, 30% more than the previous year.

We encourage our undergraduates to participate and get involved in the administrative aspects of the Faculty: they are present in the school's committees and administration boards; Students' Association manages the media communication and actively intermediates between students and the Faculty, as well as organises the annual Student Prom.

The Faculty has established and maintained a strong relationship with external partners such as RIBA, AEEA, Accademia Adrianea, and ACE. Tangible evidence of our shared commitment to architectural education is the recurring participation in a great number of international competitions and our contribution to collaborative projects organised by RIBA since 2013.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board recognises the school's efforts in the management of the RIBA visiting board and the clarity of the synoptic exhibition.
- 11.2 The board recognises the significant position Ion Mincu holds in architectural education in Romania and its efforts to provide international debate and connections for students and staff.
- 11.3 The board recognises the diverse facilities available within the school including extensive studio accommodation, galleries and exhibition space.

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

- 12.1 The board recommends that the school consider putting in place a form of external scrutiny on an annual basis, that helps to foster sustained standards and consistency, with consideration of the differences between years 1 to 5 and the diploma year. The school should also consider what form this annual appraisal or documentation would take..
- 12.2 As part of the validation process, the board strongly recommends that the school ensures that key documentation, including the academic position statement be revised in a manner suitable for publication on the RIBA website. In particular, the board recommends that the academic position statement be amended to better reflect the school's ethos and objectives.
- 12.3 For future RIBA visiting boards, the faculty must ensure that full and complete evidence is provided in order to demonstrate that all graduates meet the RIBA graduate attributes for parts 1 and 2. In particular, in sixth year, students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of graduate attributes required for part 2. The board notes that similar observations were presented by the 2012 RIBA visiting board.

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 encourages the school to explore additional opportunities the extensive external spaces within the campus offer for learning and teaching including full size and live build.
- 13.2 The board encourages the school to explore how students can be encouraged to take a more active part in student representative mechanisms within the school.
- 13.3 The school should consider how it uses the opportunity of strategic

collaborations with the city of Bucharest in developing future pedagogic activities particular to Ion Mincu. The school should also consider how this can allow the exposure of student work to the wider community.

- 13.4 The school should consider how it can build linkages between research and knowledge exchange and the teaching within the integrated masters.
- 13.5 The school should consider how it ensures that teaching, workload and assessment is coherent and consistent across studios and courses.
- 13.6 The board recognises, particularly in year 4, the move to develop design thinking and related technical solution in parallel but encourages further integration of the two. The board advises the school to consider how technical explorations, strategies and tactics be further integrated into the diploma project.
- 13.7 The board recommends that the school explore the development and discussion of innovative models and methods of professional practice in relation to the contemporary Romanian social and economic contexts.
- 13.8 The board encourages teaching staff to consider how the diploma project may provide opportunities for students to explore the complex contemporary regional conditions, and as a springboard into practice.
- 14 Delivery of academic position
Please see action point 12.2 for details.
- 15 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 Part 1 and Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates.
- 16 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 Part 1 and Part 2 criteria were met by graduates.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers (to be completed by school)

Academic year 2017-2018 total number of students (1st to 6th year)

1817 students Architecture Faculty

48 students Architecture Faculty- English language department

17.2 Documentation provided

See action point 12.3