
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to The University of Moratuwa**

-
- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s** **(report part A)**
 University of Moratuwa
 Department of Architecture
 Katubedda
 Moratuwa 10400
 Sri Lanka
- 2 Head of Architecture Group**
 Dr Gamini Weerasinghe
- 3 Course/s offered for revalidation**
 Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) for Parts 1 and 2 exemption
- Part 1 is sought at the end of the Professional Training Period after completion of the first three years of study.
 Part Two is sought at the successful completion of the B.Arch degree
- 4 Course leader/s**
 Dr. Upendra Rajapakshe
 Dr. Anishka Hettiarachchi
 Archt. Varuna de Silva
 Archt. Prasad Boteju
 Archt. Roshani Wickramanayake
- 5 Awarding body**
 University of Moratuwa
- 6 The visiting board**
- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ruth Reed | Chair |
| Bob Brown | Vice Chair |
| Lilly Kudic | |
| Harbinder Birdi | |
| Archt. Rukshan Widyalkara | 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.
- Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) for Parts 1 and 2 exemption**
- Part 1 is sought at the end of the Professional Training Period after completion of the first three years of study.
 Part Two is sought at the successful completion of the B.Arch degree

The next RIBA 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)

The architecture program of the University of Moratuwa is based on the conviction that nurturing of future architects must coincide with local building needs and aspirations, thus promoting necessary cultural dialogues and reflections, and facilitating professional development in critical directions.

The aim is to repudiate the traditional, mono-disciplinary nature of academic culture that shows divisions between architecture, construction, and social, economic and environmental sciences. Instead, the process and poetics of architecture is appraised through modicums of enlightened technocracy, cultural inquiry and social activism, in order to develop architectural graduates who are equipped to deal with the place-specific problems, possibilities and challenges, while being informed of the conditions, developments and discourses of the global practice.

In view of the above, we regard our strength is in the grooming of technically-abled, culturally-sensitive, socially-intelligent and ecologically-minded graduates tailored to serve the industry as professional architects and design practitioners. Simultaneously, the possible roles our graduates could play in the public domain as autonomous thinkers, cultural critics and social activists are also given a greater emphasis in the formation and dissemination of our academic program.

Sri Lanka is a rapidly urbanizing country with a developing economy, a vibrant socio-cultural landscape, and an illustrious heritage of building production. Since gaining its independence from the British in 1948, the country has gone through many social, political and physical transformations, thereby inserting various pressures - and opportunities - on the professional realms of architecture and construction. Its recent socio-political history, environmental impacts and the status of building industry suggest that the country is still grappled by a plethora of societal, environmental and technological challenges, which inevitably require intelligent, creative and considerate responses from the professionals of all walks of life.

The academic position of our architecture school is essentially born out of this bottom-up need to create professionals who could shoulder the national needs with sensitivity to local environment, professional context and social necessities while being exposed to the changing international discourses, developments and concerns. In responding to these objectives of the school's academic program, the subsequent teaching content is structured under five major positions of architectural inquiry.

Firstly, we instill in our students the need to assess architecture as a social craft, thus framing the function of architecture as a social and inclusive art, and acknowledging the architect's inexorable role as a responsible practitioner, thinker and member of the society at large. On the one hand, such position encourages students to evaluate the practical dimensions of design inquiries that confront specific technological and social issues relevant to the 'crafting' of an architectural outcome. On the other hand, understanding architecture as a social craft would compel students to inquire inescapable ethical prerogatives of the profession, its dependence on a diversity of social actors and influences, and its moral responsibilities to various stakeholders of the building process. In fact, being a public-funded institution, we consider social responsibility as a critical focus of our academic program.

The emphasis and interpretation of architecture as a social craft also bring into discussion – and practice – a process of learning from the history and culture of building production, and using historical precedents as an effective tool to learn about the premise of architectural design. This position moves from the belief that, in order to understand the local building needs and practices, one requires a historical grounding of architectural thinking, practices and processes.

Secondly, we expand our students' sense of responsibility towards recognizing architecture as an environmental response, through a strong research and theoretical content that examines how buildings perform in relation to specific climatic, topographic and typological conditions. Our desire for cross-disciplinary pollination of environmental sciences and design thinking stems from the need to make future architects responsible to care equally for the needs of both current and future generations. While a key focus here targets - and expands - students' capacity to generate sustainable design solutions that respond positively to the natural ecosystem, physical landscape and climatic challenges, our interpretation of sustainability goes beyond technological solutions to include notions of social sustainability, economic responsibility and creative use of resources.

In the light of rapid urbanization, social fragmentation of urban space and cultural divisions in urban labour markets, our emphasis on 'environment' extends to urban environments, and evaluates the relationship between architecture, city-making, and the subsequent social, environmental and technological conditions that determine the morphology, activity and meanings of urban space.

Thirdly, we emphasize on the role of architecture as a material practice, imparting our students with the necessary skills and competency in determining tectonic systems, solutions and advancements, and capacity to understand how design ideas are attuned to meet building performance

challenges. Students are encouraged to frame their architectural responses within a place-specific technological environment, thereby persuading them to critically examine the limitations and possibilities of the local building construction processes. The objective of such academic position is to assist students to develop architectural solutions bottom-up - i.e., by looking into the local socio-technical, socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of building production – as opposed to merely indulging on scenographic form-making.

Fourthly, we are committed to produce graduates who understand architecture as a process that acknowledges – and involves - the human element. Being respectful towards social needs, understanding peculiarities of the building users, and acknowledging building as a social process that involves a team of building actors and decision makers in its making, etc. are all part of the learning content that seeks to produce responsible - and compassionate - architectural profiles. A special focus here is invested on designing creative improvements to communities through the use of Design/build projects, thereby encouraging students to develop solutions with respect to how buildings are put up on site, socially as well as technically.

Finally, we encourage students to view architecture as an intellectual pursuit, which not only concerns with design narration, philosophy and aesthetics, but also include their ability to systematize, determine and communicate the technicalities of negotiating the art and science of an architectural approach. Such position is expected to trigger an intellectual discussion on the seemingly conflicting, but essentially interrelated, roles of architecture as both an art practice and a building practice. In doing so, students are expected to develop their own sensibilities and intellectual basis towards what makes good architecture.

Keeping in line with the afore-mentioned objectives, interpretations and positions of the academic program, the course structure is organized to trigger a process of gradual skill building, complemented by strategic examination of skills through targeted theory modules and design projects. The general teaching content also assists those students who seek opportunities to specialize in a chosen area of interest, while developing necessary skills to be a holistic architect.

Each semester is organized under a specific theme of investigation; nine 'major themes of investigations' are formulated for the nine academic semesters of the B.Arch. Honours Degree program: Environment, Craft, Space, Technology, Context, Building Process, Society, Place, and Profession. The selection of these nine 'themes' - and the subsequent building of incremental knowledge - relate back to the schools' academic vision, which, as mentioned above, is based on its five major positions of architectural inquiry: social craft, environmental response, material practice, human element and intellectual pursuit.

Learning outcomes are hence built into the semester program (in addition to module- and project-specific ILOs), thus strengthening the progressive building of the graduate profile. The subsequent phases of intellectual progression are examined both at semester level, as well as at two important stages of the B.Arch. Program: Level 3 and Level 5. This mode and structuring of course delivery formalize the passing on of specific intellectual skills to students,

establish a sense of responsibility to each semester program, and enable a natural vertical coordination strategy for the overall academic program. In addition, it also bridges the realms of 'design' and 'theory', and allows students to identify a possible – and self-determined - path for majoring of a specific study area.

As such, the B.Arch. Honours Degree program is offered within a framework for a broad-based architectural education with enhanced opportunities in a wide range of learning situations. This includes increased interaction within the academic community, profession, building industry and a wide range of peers. It offers greater opportunities to focus on diverse fields of inquiry, and facilitates a gradual skill building mechanism. To enable this planned growth of the graduate profile, the afore-mentioned 'major themes of investigations' are grouped under three phases of academic progression:

1. Exposure and discovery (from Level 1 to Level 3)
2. Apprenticeship and integration (Industrial training)
3. Comprehension and consolidation, with opportunities for majoring (Levels 4 & 5)

In the first phase called 'exposure & discovery', students are exposed to the ideas of design environment, spatiality and materiality, and encouraged to discover the complex inter-relationship that exists between the functions of environment, craft, space, technology and the physical context. More specifically, the Level 1 curriculum introduces students to spatial, cultural and compositional ideas, strategies and skills, which form the basis of creating an architectural vision and an architectural response, to interrogate and communicate notions that explore architecture as an environmental response, a social craft and a spatial art. The specific inquiries in the Level 2 focus on the notions of 'space' and 'technology', triggering student's imagination, curiosity and individuality, while introducing them to the pragmatics of building design and production. In Level 3, the theoretical spotlight falls onto the inevitable relationship architectural design weaves with its physical context in general, and with the spaces, forms and people of an urban realm in particular.

Overall, this first phase of progression provides a sound theoretical footing for the generation of innovative design responses in a complex situation. At the conclusion of this phase - in the Level 3 of the academic program - all students take a Major Design Project (MDP) to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquired during the first 3 years of their architectural education.

In the second phase - themed 'apprenticeship and integration' - students are formally apprenticed in professional practice through a monitored training program. While gaining practical experience of design and building, students are expected to inquire - both thematically and practically – the complex and essential relationship that exists between the realms of architecture and building process. Programmatically, this learning experience is also projected as an opportunity to further instil on students the profession's social and ethical responsibility, and encourage them to re-evaluate the function of architecture as a social craft.

The third phase of 'comprehension and consolidation', is built upon the knowledge and experience the students have gathered during the training period to consolidate their understanding, awareness and acknowledgement of

architectural production as both an art practice and a building practice. The Level 4 academic program encourages students to critically evaluate - and respond to - both tangible and intangible objectives, concerns and situations, which determine the role of architectural profession in responding to specific societal and place-centric attributes of building production.

In Level 5, to demonstrate the knowledge they have thus far acquired on architectural design and practice, the students complete a Comprehensive Design Project (CDP) and a Dissertation on a preferred area of study, with an option for majoring on a specific aspect of the profession. While it must be acknowledged that the specialization – or majoring – is not a critical goal of the program, the final year teaching content allows students to explore their own inclinations towards a particular area of specialized investigation, while consolidating themselves with the necessary skills to be a generalist.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The Board commends the School for its strength in taking students from diverse backgrounds and introducing them to architecture through a comprehensive education that maintains the students' individuality. The students are very supportive of what they are taught and how they are guided.
- 11.2 The Board commends the school for its ambition and emerging profile in research.
- 11.3 The Board commends the School for the clear and concise documentation provided to it, in particular the Academic Position Statement.

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 mid term 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 review the courses across all levels to implement restructuring, in order to increase the time available for reflection for students in design studio and for staff on course development. Strategies for this could include reducing the number of assessment points, particularly repeat assessments in curriculum areas, and by integrating academic outcomes within the design studio.

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 As one of only two schools of architecture in Sri Lanka at the moment, and the only State school, the Board advises that the School reflects on ways to ensure that design aspiration continues to develop and innovate, in order to remain relevant in an increasingly international market for architecture.

14.2 The Board advises that the School considers how, from its research and in its teaching within the Part 1 programme, it can support students to explore design proposals at the current boundaries of professional practice and in the academic discipline of architecture (See GA1.1).

14.3 The Board advises that the School considers how, from its research and in its teaching within the Part 2 programme, it can support students to explore design proposals allowing them to test new hypotheses and speculations (GA2.1); and to apply a comprehensive range of visual media to test, analyse, critically appraise and concisely explain design proposals (GA2.2).

15 Delivery of academic position

The following key points were noted: The board felt that this was well structured, reflecting engagement with the local culture, orientation and overseas engagement.

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 to be completed by school

At the time of the 2016 RIBA visiting board: 310

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**