

Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA visiting board to The University of Greenwich

**Date of visiting board: 22-23 June 2017
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 20 September 2017**

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- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s** (report part A)
 Faculty of Architecture, Computing and Humanities
 University of Greenwich
 11_3006
 Stockwell Street
 Park Row, London SE10 8EY
- 2 Head of Architecture Group**
 Nic Clear Head of Architecture and Landscape
- 3 Course/s offered for validation**
 Part one: BA (Hons) in Architecture
 Part two: MArch Architecture
 Part three: Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice
- 4 Course leader**
 Simon Herron Academic Leader Architecture
 Tony Clelford Post Graduate Diploma in Architectural Practice
- 5 Awarding body**
 University of Greenwich
- 6 The visiting board**
- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Christian Frost | academic / chair |
| Kate Cheyne | academic / vice chair |
| David Simister | practitioner |
| Joe Edgard | practitioner |
| Brigit Luffingham | student member |
| Justin Kelly | 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**
 At its meeting on the 20 September 2017, the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:
- Part one: BA (Hons) Architecture**
Part two: MArch Architecture
Part three: Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice
- 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

The University of Greenwich's Department of Architecture and Landscape can be traced back to the Hammersmith College of Art and Building (founded in 1881) and Woolwich Polytechnic (founded in 1890). They merged in 1970 to form Thames Polytechnic, which became the University of Greenwich in 1992.

The Department has been based in Hammersmith and Woolwich, but most recently in Dartford and Avery Hill. With the move to its new purpose-built building in Stockwell Street in 2014, Architecture and Landscape is now based in the heart of Greenwich, the newest addition to a suite of university buildings that occupy the UNESCO World Heritage site, and importantly, for the first time since 1981, has become a true London school again.

The Stockwell Street building is in fact two buildings with the new University library being housed in the first 'finger' on the northern part of the site and the 'academic building', which houses the Department of Architecture and Landscape, in the other three fingers. To support Architecture and Landscape teaching and research across our programmes the building includes fourteen landscape roofs, research greenhouses and aquaponics facilities, spacious studios and a workshop equipped with both traditional and digital tools facilities.

The Department sees this regeneration as an opportunity to establish itself as a truly international place to study and research architecture and landscape architecture. In relation to this we have developed an ambitious series of public events to support our academic programmes. 'The Hawksmoor Lectures', an International Lecture series hosted by Professor Neil Spiller, together with two conferences, consisting of a teaching conference at the beginning of the academic year and the annual Future Cities conference hosted by the AVATAR research group, have featured many of the world's leading architects, landscape architects, theorists and historians, as well as artists, writers and designers from a variety of fields. Members of the Department have also been responsible for designing and curating over fourteen exhibitions in the three galleries that are part of the Greenwich campus.

The University of Greenwich is one of the UK's few institutions to offer professionally validated Architecture and Landscape Architecture programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Though Architecture and Landscape have been running at Greenwich for many years, they did not always enjoy close links. However, one of the

central aspirations of the current leadership is to forge closer ties than ever before between the two subject areas in both teaching and research. At Part One this means that nearly a third of the credits studied over three years are taught in courses shared with Landscape students. At Part Two there are complications due to different Programme structures, but there is one course that brings the two cohorts together and it is planned that in future some of the theory teaching, particularly thesis may include some overlap.

The blurring of disciplinary boundaries is seen as essential to the development of a progressive academic and research environment and a necessity in the complex multidisciplinary professional world we now occupy. The programmes at Greenwich aim to address and define positive trends and understanding in the field of architecture and landscape, to posit new aesthetic systems and codes of representation, and to facilitate a body of knowledge, both practical and theoretical, that allows students to develop and refine their own design language, albeit within a rigorous academic framework.

Design is very much at the core of our Part One and Part Two programmes. It is the generator that powers everything else, since we believe that excellence in design should incorporate excellence in technology and, equally, be informed by a thorough understanding of the Histories, Theories and Futures of Architecture.

Within our team we can call upon some of the most experienced and successful teaching staff when it comes to winning student awards and prizes, something that has continued at Greenwich with students winning a number awards, including three RIBA Serjeant Drawing Prize medal winners in the last four years.

Another important part our portfolio is our Part Three Programme, which creates a unique and highly specialised environment that has garnered high praise from industry and the external examiners. Even though this programme is very popular there are no plans to greatly increase numbers, as it is the very boutique nature of the Programme that is the key to its success.

The University of Greenwich is a widening participation University that recruits many students from backgrounds that are not the traditional recruiting grounds for studying architecture. Given the nature of our student intake, the BA Architecture programme has to take into account the wide spread of abilities that our students come with, and the curriculum is specifically designed to gradually build skills and competencies without holding back those who are more able. This progresses through the student journey culminating in third year with a dissertation, technical study and comprehensive design project.

At Part two we recruit a large number of students from other Universities, around 75-80% of the cohort, most of these come with upper second class degrees or better, though we still have to run some courses that equip students with an appropriate skill base.

The Department of Architecture and Landscape is not a monoculture; its diversity can be seen in its teaching staff, its student cohort and through the work of its studios. To maintain this diversity, the department is a firm believer in the 'unit' system. The units at Greenwich range from the more pragmatic, run by visiting practitioners, to the more esoteric and speculative. The tools of these units range from exquisite hand drawings, parametric and generative systems, to film and animation. In many aspects of our teaching practice we are fusing traditional studio and practice based pedagogy with more contemporary approaches that fully exploit the potential of online media, virtual learning environments and social networking.

At both undergraduate and postgraduate level the approach to technology and professional studies is to try, wherever possible, to integrate them into studio design projects so that the issues can be seen as applied rather than abstract. In our Part Two programme we have adopted the position that Year One provides the major technical and professional focus, and is clearly vocational, while Year Two allows for a wider academic and speculative focus and equips students for life beyond University.

The Department makes great virtue of its links to the profession, with many of its staff on fractional contracts and still active as practitioners. Likewise, many of the unit staff are taken from practice, with the teaching of technology supported by bringing in Practice Tutors and consultants to support the preparation of the major technology reports in Year Three BA and Year One MArch Architecture and landscape education are currently undergoing some profound changes, and at Greenwich we are making sure that the nature of what we teach and research is flexible and reactive to the advances in technology and the expanding global market place. We are equipping our students with a toolkit of tactics and strategies to complement a more traditional body of skills, and to have the same passion and drive for their work that we ourselves have for our own teaching and research.

The culture of difference and openness is valued, actively promoted and manifest for all to see. The desire at Greenwich is to create an *elite* institution, not an *elitist* one.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the school on the students' digital representation at Part 1 and 2 (including still and moving images)
- 11.2 The board commends the level of support and peer learning intrinsic to the Part 3 course
- 11.3 The board commends the school's supportive environment created by the strong sense of community

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 Due to the current staff's heavy workload the school should put a resilience plan in place to ensure that staff absences do not impact upon student experience and learning**
- 12.2 The university needs to ensure that full time and fractional staff are able to use their allocated research time to complete research outputs and also applications for faculty funding initiatives**
- 12.3 In accordance with GC10.1 and 2, the school should ensure that the cost factors in building procurement are more consistently expressed within both Part 1 and Part 2 academic portfolios**
- 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 In order to enable students to more fully address attributes GA1.2 and GC1.1 the Board advises that students are encouraged to change units between years two and three so as to take advantage of the variety of approaches offered on the Part 1 course**
 - 13.2 The board advises that the university commission more furniture and storage systems that maximise the potential of the shared studio spaces to increase peer-to-peer learning**
 - 13.3 In accordance with GA1.5 more group work should be encouraged at Part 1 level**
 - 13.4 In accordance with GA2.2 the board advises that more sketches, models and process work are used in the final presentations at Part 2 level**
 - 13.5 In accordance with GC5.1, 2, and 3, the assessment, analysis and representation of context should be more evident in the final design proposals at both Part 1 and Part 2**
 - 13.6 Field trips should be available to all students in the first year of the Part 1 course**
- 14 Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted: the academic position statement accurately reflects the school's academic agenda and the features of teaching and learning that characterise and distinguish the courses offered when considered against other schools of architecture.
- 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

Please see advice points 13.1 and 13.3

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

Please see action point 12.3 and advice point 13.1 and 13.5

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

BA Architecture 194

March Architecture 101

PDAP 86

17.2 Documentation provided

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

***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**