RIBA

Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA visiting board to the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

Date of visiting board: 3 and 4 November 2022
Confirmed by RIBA: 4 May 2023

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1 **Details of institution hosting courses**
School of Architecture
Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
New Kandy Road
Malabe
Sri Lanka

2 **Courses offered for validation**
MSc Architecture

3 **Head of School:**
Prof. Lalith De Silva

   Programme Leader
Archt. Dr. Jeeva Wijesundara – Senior Lecturer

4 **Awarding body**
Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

5 **The visiting board**
Professor Kate Cheyne
Dr Luigi Pintacuda
Kathy Gal
Archt. Mano Ponniah - regional representative

   In attendance:
Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, validation manager

6 **Procedures and criteria for the online 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.

   At the time of the visit the RIBA procedures and criteria were in transition. Although the RIBA formally implemented the new Procedures and Themes and Values on 1 September 2022, the next couple of years will be seen as a transition period.

7 **Proposals of the visiting board**
On 4 May 2023 the RIBA confirmed unconditional Part 2 validation of the following course:

   MSc Architecture

   The normal validation cycle is 5 years. The RIBA will discuss with the School an appropriate date for the next visit to align the cycles of the MSc Architecture with the BSc (Hons) Architecture (Part 1) which was validated for 5 years in 2020.

8   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.

9   Academic position statement (written by the School)
Aims and outcomes
Part 2 - M. Sc (Architecture) programme for which SLIIT is seeking RIBA validation, received university validation in 2019 and commenced in September 2020 with 10 students during the intermediate COVID-19 pandemic period. It is being offered in full collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) where students are registered with LJMU from inception with the exact curriculum offered by LJMU in the UK being adopted to the Sri Lankan context with slight contextual changes for effective delivery at SLIIT.

The Uniqueness of the academic offer
This programme of study is practice-oriented, thoughtfully balanced to address the creative and technical demands of the architectural profession and is a full-time two-year programme. The inclusion of a conservation module as a strategy for sustainability, technology module incorporating structural and environmental strategies- material and details, and exposure to workings of the industry through practice and law module are important special aspects.

After the first year, students can complete the second year at LJMU; which provides opportunities for overseas study exchange and employment. The involvement of practicing architects as tutors, visiting lecturers, and reviewers for every design project provide the students with a professional and realistic experience in design studio work and it ensures the program retains strong input from the industry. It drives the foundation of interaction with industry, business, and the community.

Features of Teaching and learning
The special feature of this course is its research and inquiry-based approach to architectural design with firm environmental and technical resolution. Both years of study have a major design project in the urban context, and a project in heritage and conservation in year 1, providing with supportive knowledge and guidance required. All Design projects are set in real sites and investigate actual situations and design problems with a research base. They offer students a practical approach to dealing with live projects and real situations in terms of environmental responsiveness and technical application with exposure to the precedence of modern, energy efficient, sustainable solutions globally, and their application to tropical parts of the world.

Each design project is combined with a management and practice task component, that engages them in local regulatory aspects, fire and life safety, environmental strategies on carbon literacy and cost appraisal. The module of Management Practice and Law is a comprehensive study of a live project. This mainly intends to improve the student's understanding of a real project in the context of Architectural practice in Sri Lanka to improve skills in professional practice. This is done by engaging the student in studying a project that he/she is involved in for the year-out practical training duration. This is carried out as a comprehensive-guided case study.

A Research Dissertation is a part of the MSc Program, guided by scholarly supervisors in small student groups. This includes a comprehensive study of topic selection and research methods. The students are supported to proceed with their research as conference papers and journal publications if they wish to pursue further research. SLIIT teaching mode is student-centred. Every module is guided in small student groups, supported by lectures, tutorials, workshops, seminars, and reviews with close monitoring of the process, to retain the set RIBA's theme values of the program.

Creative interpretation of validation criteria
The course content and the delivery are carefully formulated in accordance with the LJMU program guides and curriculum to address the RIBA validation criteria specifically in achieving the following Graduate Attributes for ARB/RIBA Part 2.

- ability to generate complex design proposals showing understanding of current architectural issues, originality in the application of subject knowledge and, where appropriate, to test new hypotheses and speculations;
- ability to evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral, and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals;
- ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals;
- possess a 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;
- possess an understanding of the context of the architect and the construction industry, including the architect's role in the processes of procurement and building production, and under legislation;
- problem-solving skills, professional judgement, and ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances; and
- ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect All 4 modules of each year and module components are led by module leaders/ module component leaders, who are qualified architects and specialized in the relevant subject area to ensure the program delivery meets the RIBA general criteria and reaches the graduate attributes.

Student experience
The students enjoy designated individual workspaces in modern studio environments to which they have 24 hours / 7 days a week access. The

lecture rooms, computer labs, printing, and technology workshops at SLIIT provide an international standard study environment. Renowned for the excellence of its teaching, as well as for preparing students for the world of practice, SLIIT has created a learning and research environment with best possible resources for students. As a premier IT education institute, SLIIT has expanded its educational activities to several disciplines and presently consists of seven faculties and Schools in the fields of Architecture, Business, Computing, Engineering, Humanities & Sciences, Hospitality, and Graduate Studies & Research. It is the largest non-government, non-profit degree awarding institute in Sri Lanka having six campuses (Metro-Colombo, Malabe, Jaffna, Kandy, Matara and Kurunegala). Being an integrated school of such an organization; a university, the architecture students have the maximum benefit of interaction and peer learning from the other disciplines. SLIIT architecture students have been participating in SLIA events and activities including student jamborees, workshops, tours, student exhibitions annually, which has helped them to be more informed and connected with the architecture profession in Sri Lanka.

10   Commendations

10.1   The Board commends the research-led teaching and specialism of Heritage and Conservation embedded in the architectural curriculum.

10.2   The Board commends the depth and rigour of the analysis and research in all modules, especially where it grounds and justifies the design projects. In particular, the group work undertaken is exemplary in mimicking practice and supporting collective thinking.

10.3   The Board commends the support given to students by the staff and University through the recent crises, and the alignment with and support offered from Liverpool John Moores University.

11   Conditions
There are no conditions.

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. The university is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

12.1   The School should further develop their Academic Position Statement to highlight the School's unique and distinctive qualities, for example, greater emphasis on the strength of their Heritage and Conservation specialism and its influence on future, sustainable architectures.

12.2   Given the rigour of analysis and research, the School should ensure enough time is given to the design process and experimentation to allow students to develop in-depth project resolutions.

12.3 The Board advises the School to develop future responses to the RIBA Themes and Values for Architecture Education by evolving a climate literate and ethical practice curriculum relevant to the Sri Lankan context.

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 continued development and implementation of the School and University ambition for cross-disciplinary thinking and exploration.

13.2 The Board suggests the School considers setting up formal structures for peer-to-peer networks and student societies to support community during future growth.

13.3 The Board advises the School to enhance their expertise in adaptive reuse and conservation, for example, linking Heritage and Conservation with technology and tectonics.

13.4 The Board advises the School to continue to develop an interconnected curriculum across modules ensuring there is a clear mapping of learning outcomes back to the regulators' requirements.

14 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.

Part 2
The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MSc Architecture

15 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.

The Board made no further comments.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers
MSc Architecture: 32

16.2 Documentation provided
The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

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17 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 budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the head of institution
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff