



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to the University of Salford**

Date of visiting board: 22-23 June 2023
Confirmed by the RIBA: 25 September 2023

1 Details of institution hosting courses

Architecture and Design
School of Science, Engineering & Environment
University of Salford
Salford M5 4WT

2 Courses offered for validation

BSc (Hons) Architecture

Courses offered for Part 2 candidate course status

Master of Architecture, MArch

3 Head of School

Dr Laura Coucill, Head of Architecture + Design

4 Awarding body

University of Salford

5 The visiting board

Daniel Goodricke – Chair
Carol Norton – Vice Chair
Toby Blackman
Robert Grover

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA – Validation manager

6 Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education

The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this document is available at www.architecture.com.

7 Proposals of the visiting board

7.1 On 25 September 2023 the RIBA confirmed continued validation with conditions of the:

BSc (Hons) Architecture

Details of the condition can be found in section 11. A revisiting board will take place at a date to be agreed between the RIBA and the School.

7.2 On 25 September 2023 the RIBA confirmed candidate course status for Part 2 of the.

MArch Master of Architecture

Candidate course for validation status is recommended if the course content and structure are considered to have the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated. Candidate course status applies for a period not to exceed 3 years (Procedures for Validation, 2021, page 28).

The Board advises that the planned MArch changes are fully implemented before inviting the RIBA to consider the programme for full validation.

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 of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

9 Academic position statement (written by the School)

Salford Laboratory of Architecture (S-LAB) is a forum exploring contemporary ideas of place, culture, and technology. Reflecting the University of Salford's strategy to prepare its students for the future, S-LAB is an environment for research-led and industry-focused experiences. The laboratory thrives in the techno-industrial milieu of the region, in cutting-edge campuses and buildings, and in the ambitious student body it attracts.

September 2024 marks the 10-year anniversary of BSc Architecture at the University of Salford. In that time, the launch of the MArch programme has expanded staff expertise, broadened the scope of research-led teaching, and attracted a diverse, international student body. The introduction of S-LAB as an identity for our programmes, aligns with a new chapter for staff and students which encourages engagement and impact. It is an opportunity to expand experimental approaches to architectural education and deliver activities which support the ambitions of students through live projects, speculative design-led testing and physical prototyping of material and tectonic ideas by collaborating with world-leading research groups and facilities.

Foresight and futures thinking is part of the unique heritage of the University of Salford through its origins as a Royal Technical Institute, training workforces in the context of rapid industrialisation. Over the next decade we intend to develop our programmes to offer a unique student experience that continues to maximise accessibility, enrich the profession, and deliver innovation.

Future Challenges

Contemporary lived space is framed by the possibilities of the fifth industrial revolution and the environmental and societal challenges created by the first. Experimentation into, through and for design, will enable S-LAB to: explore the global challenges faced by society and our responsibility to decarbonise and decolonise; test the effect of emerging technologies and their implications for built environment use and performance, and; evolve design practices and processes.

Future Architects

S-LAB is concerned with informing a profession that reflects society and leads in ethical working practices and cultures. It is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion in the profession through approaches to widening participation. A regional and international student body, from a range of educational, vocational and cultural backgrounds, represents a cosmopolitical society. This brings together manifold skills and ideas and yields a culture of ambition. Together with facilities and expertise in the new SEE Building and across campus, this provides a fruitful combination for enabling transferable skills and knowledge to prepare graduates for future careers and global societal challenges.

Future Pedagogy

All briefs can be live projects. This approach builds on the University of Salford's reputation for industry engagement. It takes advantage of the academic context and creates opportunities for innovation through collaboration in ways which directly involve students as a part of their university experience.

Continued development of relationships between modules, programmes and schools provides rich learning environments and agile structures that facilitate flexible and responsive teaching delivery. Examples include expanding existing cross-programme interaction, such as the undergraduate Multidisciplinary Design Project and vertical interaction between undergraduates and postgraduates, as demonstrated in cross-institutional, transnational design studios adopted in MArch, which enabled direct student participation in COP27 (funded by the British Council). Expanding direct student engagement with research and industry partners creates valuable learning experiences of professional expectations and behaviours, broadens the possibility for international collaboration and co-production and diversifies expertise.

Future Possibilities

S-LAB provides the opportunity to build from an established and growing research base to realise, evaluate and test. Enabling student participation in community and industry engaged research events, such as the conferences and workshops organised as part of The Modern Backdrop and De-carbonising Heritage, are building blocks for offering primary research experience. The objective of the laboratory is to expand this activity to include active fieldwork, practical application and prototyping. This can happen in a range of locations and can capitalise on the forward thinking campus strategy at the University of Salford, which has installed experimental green infrastructures as part of Ignition Living Lab at Peel Park Campus for the purposes of testing and evaluation.

Routine programme reviews provide an opportunity for development in line with Tomorrow's Architects (ARB) and The Way Ahead (RIBA) to prioritise the needs of a changing profession and explore the potential of emerging technologies.

Future Skills

Access to technologies, software and technical support, as a core part of the curriculum, continues to equip students with knowledge and skills in the latest design and fabrication technologies. Shared workshops and an industry funded Makerspace are complemented by dedicated 3D printing, VR facilities and technical expertise located in studio. Specialist expertise continues build on foundational, transferable knowledge and skills in communication and representation that are central to the architectural profession and which are delivered by academics and practitioners. Student facing industry engagement and multidisciplinary activity is critical for innovation. It provides exposure to new skill sets, offers potential for knowledge exchange, and gives primary experience of the mandatory competencies. This is being developed through closer involvement of the Industry Advisory Board in student reviews and through practice-based experiences as a fundamental aspect of the programmes.

Future Studio

S-LAB pedagogy positions studio as a dispersed activity that exists on campus (dedicated, high-spec studios and workshops), in the field (on site), in teams (connecting with practices and research centres) and through digitally enabled environments (online). This approach accommodates flexible and experimental modes of working alongside valuable located experiences which make learning memorable. Adopting a digitally infused approach to studio enables local, transnational and multidisciplinary interaction that uses local and particular environments as a test bed for transferability.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the University's investment in the architecture subject area through the provision of studios, specialist facilities and technical expertise and within the new SEE Building.
- 10.2 The Board commends the collegiate culture between architecture, cognate disciplines and local industry network.

11 Conditions

- 11.1 Conditional validation of the Part 1 course has been recommended as the following graduate attribute has not been met:

“Apply analytical techniques and problem-solving skills to different types of architectural questions, understanding a complex body of knowledge, some at the current boundaries of the discipline.”

The Board concluded that the 20-credit structure of the course constrained opportunities to produce a fully integrated design project to a sufficient standard to meet this graduate attribute.

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 Board requires that the School supports students to better demonstrate pertinent health and life safety knowledge and statutory requirements in their integrated studio design projects.
- 12.2 The Board requires that the School embed a critical approach to professional ethics at all stages.
- 12.3 The Board requires that the School develop briefs that enable students to explore aesthetic, compositional, and spatial principles through reflective practices including physical modelmaking and creative arts. We would recommend fully utilising the facilities available within the University.
- 12.4 The Board requires that student wellbeing policies are consistently communicated.

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 advises that the course leaders brief external examiners to maximise the benefit of their expertise.
- 13.2 The Board advises that the student experience, enhanced by practitioner links, be preserved and broadened to include a broader range of architectural practices.

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.

14.1 Graduate Attributes for Part 1

BSc (Hons) Architecture: Please see condition 11.1.

14.2 Graduate Attributes for Part 2

The Board recommended that Candidate Course status for Part 2 be awarded to the MArch. This means that the course content and structure are considered to have the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated.

15 Review of work against Themes and Values

It should be noted that where the visiting board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or one or more of the themes and values were clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested one or more of the themes and values was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

15.1 Themes and Values for Part 1

The Board considered that the RIBA Themes and Values had been met by the graduates of the BSc (Hons) Part 1.

15.2 Themes and Values for Part 2

The Board recommended that Candidate Course status for Part 2 be awarded to the MArch. This means that the course content and structure are considered to have the potential to meet the RIBA framework and are implemented in the way anticipated.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

BSc (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: 170
MArch, candidate course for Part 2: 42

16.2 Documentation provided

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

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 architecture budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with Head of Institution
- Meeting with staff