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Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA Visiting
Board to the University of Strathclyde

Date of visiting board: 10 and 11 December 2020
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 19 April 2021

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1   Details of institution hosting course
Department of Architecture
University of Strathclyde
James Weir Building
75 Montrose St
Glasgow G1 1XJ

2   Head of Department
Professor Tim Sharpe

Deputy Head of Department – Undergraduate
Dr Mike Grant

Director of Part 1 and 2
Derek Hill

3   Course/s offered for revalidation
Part 1: 3 years
BSc Architectural Studies (ordinary)
BSc Architectural Studies with International Study (ordinary)

Part1: 4 years
BSc Architectural Studies (hons)
BSc Architectural Studies with International Study (hons)

Part 2:
PgDip/MArch Advanced Architectural Studies
PgDip/MArch Architectural Design (International)

4   Awarding body
University of Strathclyde

5   The visiting board
Professor Lorraine Farrelly – Chair
Musa Garba – Vice Chair
John Ashton
Paul King

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, validation manager – in attendance

6   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.

The procedures were adapted to allow the board to function remotely to
comply with government Covid regulations.

All requirements for documentation and portfolio samples were exactly as
for a physical visiting board but viewed remotely.

The timetable and all meetings took place as for a physical board but remotely.

7   Recommendation of the Visiting Board
At its meeting on 19 April 2021 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses be unconditionally revalidated:

Part 1: 3 years
BSc Architectural Studies (ordinary)
BSc Architectural Studies with International Study (ordinary)

Part1: 4 years
BSc Architectural Studies (hons)
BSc Architectural Studies with International Study (hons)

Part 2:
PgDip/MArch Advanced Architectural Studies
PgDip/MArch Architectural Design (International)

8   Standard requirements for validation
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 (statement written by the school)
In its present form The University of Strathclyde Department of Architecture was formally established in 1967, although the teaching of architecture at the origins of the technological institution started in late 1800s. The Department is among the oldest and largest in the UK and enjoys a distinguished international reputation with consistent high performance in league tables and exemplary student employment. The Department captures the University's ethos as 'the place of useful learning' in its vision, mission, and standard pedagogical practice.

Operating at the intersection of art and design, culture and technology, engineering and society, in global and local contexts, our teaching addresses the environmental and societal challenges facing the built environment and places emphasis on the opportunities those challenges create. Its vision is to continue to be one of the world leading providers of education and research in sustainable architecture and urban design while

contributing effectively to global society and to the welfare of the country. Such a vision is articulated in a mission that attempts to reflect the trans-disciplinary nature of architecture as a profession and as an academic discipline. Through a range of pedagogical approaches, the Department strives to:

- Produce global graduates who are well equipped and prepared to meet the needs and challenges of the bult environment in the 21st century.
- Enable students to acquire knowledge and skills and implement these in design and practice. • Excel in design studio teaching and delivery of instruction while promoting a culture of scholarship and life-long learning.
- Create and disseminate knowledge through world class research, knowledge exchange and exemplary practice.
- Advance and apply professional knowledge and expertise through effective international partnerships and service to the profession and society at large.

The study of architecture at Strathclyde utilises its location in the heart of an aspiring and continuously growing city. Glasgow, named as one of the world's top 100 cities, is surrounded by distinct landscape with cosmopolitan outlook, offers a richness and diversity in its built environment and thus provides a unique opportunity for learning about architecture and urbanism. The issues explored in design projects address the existing and emerging challenges of the city, its professional and cultural institutions and its local communities. This enables instructive and constructive discourse that crosses the boundaries between academia, society, and the profession.

At the same time, in terms of both recruitment and international engagement the Department has significantly extended its global reach. We have established collaborative agreements and partnerships with institutions in China and Inner Mongolia, India and Hong Kong, Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait and the USA and our overseas cohort has grown from 61 (in 15/16) to 119 (in 20/21). Our students have undertaken recent project work in countries ranging from Nepal to USA and from Nova Scotia to Thailand. These opportunities expose our students to diverse learning experiences abroad, offer a vehicle for them to learn more about contemporary global issues, and allow them to propose contributions to global challenges within the built environment, such as those identified within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Research projects and outputs are applied internationally, addressing issues of energy, sustainability and urbanism across the globe.

Two major aspects that characterize our course delivery:
- Balancing students' learning through exposing them to both local and global contexts underscores the multiple roles these nascent architects of our future could and should be able to play in different contexts. Such roles range from individual (sole) design decision makers to facilitators.
- Our teaching practices focus on implementing experiential, active, inquiry-based, and reflective learning approaches. This echoes the aim to

integrate the 'art' of making and the 'act' of making into students' learning and this enables students to develop an understanding and ability to undertake design as an evolving process.

The strong design led profession in the city provides a pool of talented mentors and as such we are proud of the integrated delivery of our courses by experienced full time professionally qualified staff, professional engineers, and a multi-generational cohort of part-time staff with strong commitment to linking professional practice imperatives to studio pedagogy.

In the Part I course students acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills across a wide spectrum of aspects that influence the production of architecture. Ranging from a conscious-raising foundation through to a series of making and doing projects offered in Year 1 students acquire the necessary skills in physical and digital modelling and IT and manual skills. Through their exposure to live projects from the early stages of the learning process they learn that they can conceptualize spaces and still end up with something that can be built. Understanding contextual issues and integrating them with structure, construction, and choice of materials is an integral component of Year 2 design endeavours. As they move toward completing Part I students design in more complex situations where the numbers of variables that affect the design outcome are increased to include designing multi-occupancy housing and buildings for cultural enterprises in a dense urban context in Year 3. In these projects more factors are conceived to go in parallel to the development of design propositions including budget, legislative demands, client demands, user needs, and health and safety.

The Part II course is based on imparting of knowledge and skills necessary for successful practice, but also involves developing and embedding values, and cultural and philosophical positions in the student's approach. It is also the point at which evidence-based design through research comes to the fore. In Year 4, which constitutes the first year of a two-year PG Diploma in Advanced Architectural Design, and the first year of a two year Masters in Architectural Design International (MADi), students produce a research piece (the Dissertation) with the support of a range of specialisms. In design terms, the drive is to reconcile technical and programmatic aspects of architecture with conceptual propositions. Students in Year 5 synthesise various types of knowledge assimilated throughout the course of their studies with the support of a series of higher-level optional classes into a focussed design process that seeks to integrate formal and technical abilities into a comprehensive design thesis.

10 Conditions
There are no conditions.

11. Commendations
11.1 The board commends the School on the strong relationship between staff and students and the community that this fosters. The board recognises this has created a positive character and identity for the School.

11.2   The strong team of practice- based staff offers a unique opportunity for practice collaboration in both teaching and research.

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 asks the School to consider the IT provision across the professional courses to ensure that students have access to appropriate environmental and collaborative modelling and simulation software such as BIM, and associated computer hardware and that this is readily available to students to use to support their studies. This would further enhance the student experience across the faculty and their future careers in architecture practice. This additional investment would support the School's strategic development plan, and in particular, to reinforce the school's position and ambition to be considered a leader in this area, providing education and research in sustainable architecture and design.

12.2   The School should have a strategic overview of technical studies and how they relate to the design studios and provide an integrated experience for students. The board encourages the School to map the vision for the learning, teaching and assessment of technology across Part 1 & Part 2 of the professional course, to ensure this integration is embedded and evidenced in the curriculum and the student portfolio.

12.3   There are many positive relationships with practice across the School and these should be used more effectively to make explicit to students the role of the architect and also key aspects of professionalism that will inform their future careers. The output of the ITP module 315 should be reviewed to make explicit its coverage of the GC11 criteria. In particular, the board considered the coursework in Part 1, offers a narrow perspective of Professional Practice, which did not capture the wider, informal discussions happening throughout the School. The School should capitalise on the expertise & experience of practitioners so that they can share their knowledge of practice with students. The School should ensure that all learning opportunities relating to professional practice are clearly documented and evidenced in students' work.

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   Process development in design is not consistently evident in portfolios and should be more clearly demonstrated. Students should clearly document and ascribe value to the work produced during the design process and development stages of a studio project.

13.2 The School should encourage students to explore the use of models at all stages of design. These models should be used at presentation stage to explain design development. Physical modelmaking should continue to be an intrinsic element of design studio work beyond years 1 and 2.

13.3 The use of precedent is important for architecture students in design projects, there is evidence of precedent informing design, however there should be more of a critical and precise analysis of precedent and its relevance to the design studio.

13.4 We would advise the School to explore the opportunities to work across the faculty and broader University to offer students an interdisciplinary teaching and learning experience to inform their future practice as architects. The Board encourages the School to work with other departments in the Faculty. This will introduce the students to collaborative working & help with the School's teaching, learning and research aspirations.

The School are advised to take advantage of the array of disciplines across the faculty to inform teaching and research in architecture.

13.5 The School is advised to refresh studio project briefs on a regular basis to ensure the curriculum and content remains current and continues to challenge. The board encourages the School to regularly review design project briefs so that they reflect the challenges and opportunities of contemporary practice, society and discourse.

13.6 The Academic Position Statement outlines the collaborative teaching and connections internationally for students. How this continues to inform the curriculum, the student experience and research needs to be considered strategically. The Board encourages the School to take advantage of their strong links internationally. This could manifest as areas of research or inform design studio teaching.

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 Part 1
The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met.

14.2 Part 2
The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met.

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

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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 (from the School)
Part1: 286
Part 2: 298

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 budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff