
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to the AMC Metropolitan College**
in association with the University of East London, UK

Thessaloniki Campus

BA (Hons) Architecture

Date of visiting board: 13/14 July 2016

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 7 December 2016

1 Details of institution hosting course (report part A)

AKMI Metropolitan College
14 El. Venizelou & Tsimiski str., Thessaloniki 546 24
Greece

2 Head of Architecture

Antonis Mouhtaropoulos

3 Course offered for validation

BA (Hons) Architecture

4 Course leader, BA (Hons) Architecture

Kallikratis Evlogimenos

5 Awarding body

The University of East London
University Way
London E16 2RD
UK

6 The visiting board

Professor Paul Jones, Chair
Ms Stefanie Rhodes, continuity with exploratory board
Eirini Oreopoulou, regional representative.

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, Validation Manager, was in attendance.

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

At its meeting on 7 December 2016 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional validation of the following:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Thessaloniki campus

The next full visiting board to AMC Thessaloniki should 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

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- 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 (written by the School)

AMC's main focus is on quality, starting with small groups and expanding the numbers gradually, an approach that enables us to retain high quality of studies. In order to do so an investment has been realised in order to provide our students with the resources an Architecture programme demands. Moreover, the core of the programme's staff are graduates from UK institutions, familiar with the British educational system and the RIBA criteria. Furthermore, the constant communication between the UEL team and the AMC team so far has guaranteed the high standard of quality and the programme is in accordance with best practice and takes account of the vocational, as well as the academic scopes. Our mission is to provide transformational education to students intended to instil in them strong academic skills and discipline, build professional character ethos and create life-long intellectual passion. Among our goals are to provide an academically challenging environment and an in-depth preparation for their entry into a professional career, to instil in students a strong sense of community values and to assure technology literacy in all of them.

The Architecture programme was introduced at AMC (Thessaloniki campus) in 2013, in the belief that its philosophy distinguishes from the other architecture programmes in Greece. As this is a franchised programme, in its collaborative basis, it adapts to UEL's undergraduate Architecture programme philosophy, framework and specifications. The two major elements are the hands-on exploration of materials and the holistic and integrated programme design. The latter is what distinguishes the programme from other schools in Greece. The particular character of the programme is recognisable in its 'hands-on' approach to architecture, working with the physical exploration of materials and the processes of site and context. The programme's main objective is to provide a coherent integrated pattern of education in architecture.

A key emphasis of the degree is the development of a social agenda and the encouragement of transferable skills, design development that will be of value to students in employment and in society. Students work individually, frequently in groups and also collaborate with a number of cultural and non-profit organisations aiming to balance academic achievement with the acquisition of technical and practical skills in an ever-changing social environment.

In addition, the programme is structured based on local materials, needs, and reflecting local conditions of the area of Northern Greece and the city of Thessaloniki in particular.

In addition, the programme aims to foster an enquiring spirit, intellectual curiosity and speculation, and a diversity of creativity in students. These coupled with the development of their own learning skills will enable students to reflect on and affect the direction of their future creative lives and their own academic and career development needs. Furthermore, the programme provides a professional course leading to a career as an architect.

The BA (Hons) Architecture programme is an integrated programme with four 30 credit modules per level. The programme is divided into two parts, Design, which forms the core activity in an architectural education, and Supporting Studies (Technical Studies, Professional Studies, History and Theory, and Computing and Representation) comprising the skills and knowledge more effectively learnt through other means than the design project.

The first year of the BA programme prepares students in the basic skills and understanding they will require in later parts of the programme, while the Supporting courses offer a theoretical, environmental, social and technical basis from which to understand the design work. They provide a related but independent program of study.

The Design module enables students to produce imaginative, appropriate and competent design proposals in response to a variety of sites, briefs, cultural, social and technological issues.

Supporting Studies include the reading, writing and discussion of the history and theory of architecture, the theoretical knowledge and understanding of the technology and environmental impact of buildings, and some of the professional aspects of procuring and commissioning of buildings.

The History and Theory module aims to orient and critically engage the student in the subject of architecture and also in its relationship with art and design culture through engaging with selected histories and theories through engagement with relevant art, culture, technology and contemporary practice.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The School's social agenda as seen through its commitment to humanitarian architecture.
- 11.2 The commitment of the staff to teaching and pastoral support for students.

12 Conditions

There are no conditions.

13 Action points

The board acknowledges that the School and students have made significant progress in the three years of the programme's operation and particularly over the last six months since the exploratory board.

Nevertheless, in the interest of continuous improvement, the visiting board proposes the following action points.

13.1 Now that the initial cohort has graduated the board strongly recommends that a principal academic from UEL, with experience of writing programmes and curricula, works with AMC to improve the following:

- The alignment of the non-design modules with the design projects at all levels
- A rebalancing of ambition of the design projects in each year to ensure that the students are appropriately challenged.
Currently the scale and complexity of a number of first year projects is beyond the students' ability, at the cost of development and creative learning; while the third year projects can be too small and at times tend to repeat the learning outcomes of the second year.
- The current design inquiry within the School- albeit welcome and topical- is in danger of being too limited to deal with the full complexity and richness of the city and wider region.
- The demonstration of the School's philosophy in practice through a continued development of links with the wider architectural community in the region and the city. This will also help better articulate School's academic position statement.

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.

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.

The board advises that the programme team introduces one or two more projects in first year with an emphasis on creative exploration and output. The programme team should also consider adding an additional project to third year to increase the pace and depth of learning. This project should be sited in a location with different contextual parameters.

15 Delivery of academic position (report part B)

The following key points were noted:

15.1 The Board hopes that action point 13.1 will help the School in its articulation of its academic position and that the outcomes of this will be more explicit in student work.

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.

The board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the programme.

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.

The Board made no further comments.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

7 third year graduating students

18.2 Documentation provided

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

19. 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 next full visiting board.

- Head of School and course team meeting
- Student meeting
- External examiner meeting