
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full Visiting Board
to the University of Architecture, Civil
Engineering & Geodesy**

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- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s** **(report part A)**
 University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy
 1 Hr. Smirnenski Blvd
 1046 Sofia
 Bulgaria
- 2 Head of School**
 Prof. Dr. Arch. Asen PISARSKI Dean
- 3 Course/s offered for validation**
 MSc Programme of Architecture Parts 1 & 2
- 4 Course leader/s**
 Emil Jordanov, Ivan Danov , Gichka Kutova - Part 1
 Bojko Kadinov, Asen Pisarski, Kalin Tiholov, Jordanka Kandulkova -
 Part 2
- 5 Awarding body**
 University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy
- 6 The visiting board**
 Norman Wienand chair / academic
 Sally Stewart vice chair / academic
 Nic Clear academic
 Alison Coutinho practitioner
 Atanas Dinev 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**
 On the 22 January 2020 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are validated with conditions
- MSc Programme of Architecture Parts 1 & 2**
- Re-evaluation of the student portfolios by means of a revisit by a sub-group to consider the Faculty's response to the conditions will take place on a date agreed between the faculty and the RIBA.
- 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
(Statement written by the school)

The Faculty of Architecture (FA) is situated within the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG), the former Higher Institute of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy which is the eldest institution in Bulgaria offering an education in the fields of civil engineering and architecture since 1942. Located within the city center of Sofia the Faculty of Architecture offers Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programs, concentrating at one campus all educational facilities, library, student workshops and exhibition spaces.

The Faculty of Architecture has developed its own approach to architectural education and research focusing on a complex professional development of students with a wide range of disciplines from engineering, liberal arts and social sciences. The long experience and traditions within the Faculty of Architecture, as a unit of a Higher School in Bulgaria, make it possible to achieve a continuous development in education and providing training to specialists in different areas of architecture, urbanism and landscape planning.

During 11 semesters or 5.5 years of education, students have to study 87 disciplines - 45 lecture courses, 26 design projects, 5 types of practical trainings and other engineering design projects and drawing exercises. The distribution of disciplines by scientific field for a graduate MASTER degree in architecture and its related professional qualification is regulated by a state by Ordinance for the Unified State Requirements for Acquiring Higher Education in "Architecture" of Degree "Master" with Formal Qualification "Architect"(adopted by state decree № 7 of 26 Jan 2016, comes into force from academic year 2016 - 2017, adopted by Government Resolution No 11 of 21 Jan 2016) defining 11 scientific fields in architectural education - Theory and History of Architecture and Arts; Humanities, Social, Economic and Legal Studies; Natural Science, Mathematics and Informatics; Architectural Typology and Architectural Design; Interior Design; Spatial planning, Landscape Design and Urban Planning; Architectural technologies and control of the environments; Building materials, Structural design and technologies; Arts; Informatics technologies for design; Practice of the profession for professional proficiency.

The Faculty of Architecture faces a series of new challenges due to the changing national and international context of development of architectural education. This is a permanent process of introduction of directions and standards to ensure good quality of higher education within the European Union (ESG). This changed context requires focused efforts from all the faculty of AF toward an adequate development of educational, research and design activities within a

process of widening international exchanges and growing mobility of teachers and students.

The high assessment given by the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation (NAEA) positioned the Faculty of Architecture at first place above other schools of architecture and guarantee the constant interest of local and foreign applicants in the training provided by the Faculty. The high degree of social necessity of the M.Sc. programme of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape is ensured by the increasing scope of application in different economic and cultural areas.

The international popularity of the UACEG and the international recognition of architecture education in the Faculty of Architecture made it possible to establish relations with world-renowned architects, thus the title Doctor Honoris Causa was granted to Swiss arch. Mario Botta in 2016, Italian arch. Dante Benini in 2018 and Japanese arch. Kengo Kuma in 2019.

Educational activities

The main priorities in the educational activities of the Faculty of Architecture within the period 2015-2019 are seen in the following directions:

- To apply measures to maintain and improve the quality of education in architecture toward establishing a sustainable standard of education within the European context;
- To harmonize the inner system of evaluation and maintenance of quality of education with the changes in the legislative framework approving **“Procedures and rules for elaboration, evaluation and approval of curricula and syllabuses and for evaluation of the results from the education in every degree program at the Faculty of Architecture of UACEG”** to actualize inner standards for education and academic curriculum for every disciplines in FA and consider the recommendations and validation criteria of RIBA.
- To introduce a new methodology for an assessment system for evaluation of the multifold activities of faculty in FA in accordance with national and international validation procedures approving **“Minimum Standard Requirements and Criteria for Evaluation and Grading of the Knowledge, Skills and Competence of the Students”**.
- To guarantee a professional and objective evaluation of student design projects with a strong feedback among faculty and students. In new document **“Minimum Standard Requirements for Receiving Countersign of Seminars and Study Projects”** were formulated clear criteria for evaluation in advance and give the opportunity for students to defend their projects as an integral part of the education process.
- To strengthen the connections between education and architectural/ building practice – use of design briefs from the practice in the education; lectures, consultations and training possibilities for students by distinguished architectural and building practitioners and materials producers.

International activities

- To improve the significant international co-operation of the Faculty with similar Higher Schools and Faculties abroad with some successful participation in a number of international projects within different programmes.
- To stimulate wider participation in European funded programs for professional development of students and faculty and renovation of existing educational facilities conferences, seminars and renovation of existing educational facilities. To continue further multiple collaboration projects with European and other international partners.

Research and design activities of AF

- It is necessary to relate the research at AF with the National strategy for development of scientific research 2020. In accordance with world and European trends an important role should be played by university science in the development of applied scientific research as a center for generation of research and design achievements - factor in the university evaluation.
- To maintain the trend of supporting members of the faculty to play a leading role as experts in architecture and urbanism – as jury members of architectural competitions, debates and fora, in the creation of the legislative framework in architectural design and urban planning and further changes in the respective laws and regulations.

AF management

To improve coordination and horizontal connections among the departments in the AF. The role of the Dean is to express and coordinate the interests of all departments and support their initiatives. To stimulate continuing education and development of faculty and a fruitful environment for Ph D students to support the completion of their studies. To improve the working spaces for students at the university enabling more students to have access to studio type of spaces to work on their projects. We aim to revive the tradition of creative discussions and information exchange among teachers and students in an informal atmosphere. To take decisive measures to optimize the administrative assistance of educational process by using the potential of computer systems.

11 Conditions

The following conditions of recognition apply:

- 11.1** The Faculty must make available to the RIBA Visiting Board portfolios containing the full range of students' achievements. An academic portfolio contains all assessed work produced by a student in disciplines where the RIBA Graduate Attributes and General Criteria are met. (as noted in clause 4.7 of the RIBA Procedures for Validation).
- 11.2** The Board found insufficient evidence that Graduate Attributes GA 1.4, GA1.5, GA2.3, GA2.4 and GA2.6 were demonstrated within the academic portfolios. The Faculty must provide evidence which clearly illustrates how all Graduate Attributes and General Criteria are fully met.

- 11.3** The Board requested supplementary evidence on the first day of the visit which, when presented, still did not meet the Validation requirements. The Faculty must provide a mapping document that clearly illustrates in which disciplines, and with which element of academic work, each of the RIBA Graduate Attributes and General Criteria are fully met.

Revisits (page 37 of Procedures document)

where the revisiting sub-group is satisfied the conditions in the report have been met, the RIBA Education Committee will recommend validation without conditions until the next scheduled visiting board (i.e. 5 years after the last full board visit)

If after considering new work at the revisit, the sub-group is not satisfied the necessary improvements have been made, a full board will visit the school usually no more than 12 months after the revisiting sub-group; **this will result either in continued validation or withdrawal of validation**

If no revisit is agreed with the school within 3 months of the RIBA Education Committee ratifying the final version of the visiting board report requiring a revisit, **validation will be withdrawn.**

12 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 12.1 The Board commends the manner in which the validation visit coordinator at UACEG responded to their requests for additional documentation and clarification during the visit.

13 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.

- 13.1 The Faculty must make available a small synoptic exhibition of students' work, sufficient to explain the current academic themes of the course, the academic position of the school and the aims and objectives of each module studied.
- 13.2 As per action point 13.4 of the previous RIBA Visiting Board report, the Faculty need to produce confirmation from external examiners that all RIBA Graduate Attributes and Validation Criteria have been met across the pathways. This annual report needs to reflect the outcomes at each Graduation.

14. Advice

The visiting board offers the following advice to the Department on desirable, but not essential improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards.

- 14.1 The Board advises that the Faculty consider how coordination and leadership of the three educational levels contained within the MSc: introductory, professional and specialisation can be better supported.
- 14.2 The students voiced the frustration about the lack of opportunities to experiment with alternative forms of representation. The Faculty should take this feedback into consideration.

15 Delivery of academic position

The academic position did not show much of an understanding regarding the ethos of the Faculty and its regional/social positioning. The Faculty should consider how areas of activity and specific outcomes could be considered as exceptional and the features of teaching and learning that characterise and distinguish the course offered when considered against other schools of architecture

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.

Graduate Attributes for Parts 1 and 2

Please see Conditions 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3.

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.

Graduate Criteria for Parts 1 and 2

Please see Conditions 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

First year students – 181
 Second year students – 171
 Third year students – 166
 Fourth year students – 154
 Fifth year students – 149
 Diploma period (11th sem.) students – 128
 Total number of students – 149

(number of students in the winter semester of the academic year 2018/2019)

18.2 Documentation provided

Whilst the documentation prior to the visit was adequate, accurate mapping had not been provided. Please see condition 11.3

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**