
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to the
Universidad Nacional de Colombia -
Bogotá**

Date of visiting board: 11/12 May 2017

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 20 September 2017

1 Details of institution hosting course/s
Universidad Nacional de Colombia (UNC) Bogotá
Cra 45, Bogotá, Colombia

2 Head of School
Andrés Felipe Pérez Marín

3 Courses offered for validation
The Programme of Architecture

4 Awarding body
Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá

5 The visiting board
Professor Karim Hadjri, Chair
Kate Cheyne, Vice Chair
Ian Wroot
Carlos Sanchez
Javier Peinado - regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, Validation Manager – in attendance.

The Board would like to thank Juan Francisco Gomez for interpreting during many of the major meetings.

The Board would like to thank Ian Johnston for translation and other assistance during the visit and Katherine Álvarez Bermudez for her help.

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.

7 Proposals of the visiting board
On 20 September 2017 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed, by circulation, that the following courses and qualifications be **validated with conditions**:

The Programme of Architecture, Part 1 and Part 2

This is effective from the 2016 graduating cohort. A revisiting board will take place at a date to be agreed between the School and the RIBA to determine whether the conditions have been satisfied.

The next full board should take place in 2022.

8 Standard requirements for continued recognition
Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

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- 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)

1.1 TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

The Programme of Architecture and Urbanism at the Faculty of Arts of Universidad Nacional de Colombia is the first university programme in architecture in Colombia. Created in 1936, the programme has a sound tradition in the pursuit of excellence in the education of architects for the country that celebrates 80 years of existence.

Le Corbusier visited the Faculty in 1946, when he came to work in the Master Plan for Bogota and the city had 600.000 people. His work and way of thinking architecture and urbanism had a profound influence in the School and in Colombian architecture. From the start, the School gathered around a whole generation of brilliant national professors educated abroad, as well as a select group of international professors that came to set forth high standards in architecture. Through their example and work, they left a mark of rigour and excellence, and the best qualities of Modern Architecture and Urbanism that identify the graduates from the programme until today, when the population of the city has grown to 9'800.000 people.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME.

The programme understands architecture as the art and technique of planning, designing, building and modifying the built and urban spaces. It trains architects focussed on the qualitative construction of the inhabitable environment in Colombian cities through the different scales of the design project, be it urbanistic, of the human settlements and neighbourhoods, or of the public and private buildings of all types. Architecture and urbanism are understood as cultural facts of great social relevance. The programme prepares architects to contribute to improving the conditions of the physical environment for cities where the highest demands of habitability are present as collective problems. It interprets in local terms the state of the art of national, Latin American and international debates on architecture in relation to Colombian needs for a more inclusive and peaceful society, and in relation to the controversies and tendencies of the profession. It keeps a permanent spirit of inquiry on local issues related to problems and needs in architecture and urbanism,

guiding the studies towards research and learning from theory and practice in all areas of activity in architecture.

1.3.1 TEN POINTS FOR AN ACADEMIC AGENDA

1.3.2 To benefit from being part of the University of the Nation and a state funded public university. *With 150 years of history, its influence, size and research capacities makes it one of the most important academic centres in Colombia and one of the most outstanding in Latin America. It is characterised for its interest and advocacy in defence of the public, the common good and the problems of the poor and the weak in society. It contributes to the development and re-significance of the Nation's project. With 20 faculties throughout the country, it provides the largest offering of academic programmes, promotes critical and interdisciplinary studies and trains competent and socially responsible professionals.*

1.3.3 To benefit from being part of a Faculty of Arts. *Focussed on creativity, symbolic thought and the relationship between the arts and the aesthetic values of society, with great potential for mutual learning from the fields of architecture and urbanism, music, plastic and visual arts, industrial design, graphic design, film and television.*

1.3.4 To benefit from having an outstanding group of students and professors. *As university of the Nation, it is highly sought after by brilliant students coming from all regions, ethnicities and socio-economic strata of the country. An applicant must outclass 14 applicants to be admitted. The programme seeks the encounter of excellent students with excellent professors, and is structured as a tool box at the service of students making the synthesis through their own learning processes. 78 outstanding professors: 5 with exclusive dedication, 52 full-time, 8 part-time, and 13 hourly paid professors, selected through public merit-based competition calls, with a view to having the best student/professor ratio in the country. Their performance is thoroughly evaluated every 5 years on average. Their salary is determined by their academic productivity.*

1.3.5 To benefit from having an undergraduate programme in architecture. *That seeks comprehensiveness and balances foundation, professional and elective courses in 179 credits in a 10 semester course of study with 10 architectural design studio courses as the back bone of the programme, supplemented with courses and seminars in construction technology, structures, urbanism, representation, and the history and theory of architecture.*

1.3.6 To be consistent with the Architect's profile chosen by the School. *An integral architect that understands the requirements of the art of architecture and supplements them with a solid technological foundation and understanding of urban and environmental problems. An architect who has the knowledge of the history and theory of architecture, acts with responsibility, professional ethics and integrity, that is capable of leading all other*

professionals taking part in the building process and is concerned with the protection and improvement of the public realm in society. An architect that is global and local at the same time, one that understands the particularities of the place where he or she has to work and can act as a cultural amphibian, that is, “as a person that gets on adequately in several cultural traditions and facilitates communication among them”.¹

- 1.3.7 To benefit from having graduate programmes in all areas of architecture** and research production to continue to lead in research in their respective fields. The graduate programmes feedback the undergraduate programme with new production coming from the: Master in Architecture, Master in Construction, Master in Urbanism, Master in Urban Design, Master in the History and Theory of Architecture and the City, Master in Urban Land-Use and Planning, Master in Habitat, Master in Heritage Conservation, Master in Housing, and the only Doctoral programme in Arts and Architecture currently existing in Colombia
- 1.3.8 To continue seeking for the improvement of physical resources and activities for the programme.** New building project underway with planned laboratories, workshops, auditoriums, classrooms and design studio workshop space. Active schedule of conferences, seminars, exhibitions and activities around architecture. The only Architecture Museum in Colombia. Busy schedule of exhibitions, conferences, national and international guests. Complete library with great potential for improving and updating.
- 1.3.9 To benefit from having the Academic Outreach Centre (CEA) and to develop its academic potential.** As an opportunity for professional practice, the CEA offers advice and consultancy to national, regional and local governmental institutions on issues relating to architecture. It is an opportunity for professional practice engaging a good number of students and professors in consultancy projects for governmental institutions. It is supplemented with other outreach and continuous education activities like the Programme of internationalisation and connection to other local schools, the Professional Practice and Internship Programme and the Permanent Education Programme, as well as the Community Interaction Programme.
- 1.3.10 To continue promoting research and inquiry in architecture.** The Faculty has its research institutes and is permanently opening funding opportunities for research and inquiry projects; with economic support from the Office of the Vice-Dean of Research and Outreach varying from \$15 to \$30 million Colombian pesos per project. There are also support programs from the University.

¹ Mockus, A. (2010). *Anfibios culturales y divorcio entre Ley, Moral y Cultura* Revista Aleph Nº 153

1.3.11 To continue with the positive impact of graduates in society and to get closer to alumni. Continue with the tradition of excellence and quality of our graduates in architecture. Numerous awards in Colombian Biennales of Architecture and local design competitions. Excellent reputation. Alumni dedicated to architectural design and construction. Professors at other universities. Public servants. Building construction managers of public and private works. Researchers in the history and theory of architecture. Get alumni involved with the School of Architecture's programmes and support.

1.4 ASPECTS OF TEACHING CHARACTERISING THE PROGRAMME:

1.4.1 Design Studio as a pedagogic space originating in the Early Renaissance, and one of the great contributions from the arts to education. The 10-semester course integrates all areas of knowledge in architecture through the architectural project in the design studio as the synthesis of art and science of its time.

1.4.2 Survey measured drawings of architecture as one of the best ways of studying architecture and understanding its order, conception and detail.

1.4.3 Free hand and technical drawing as a central way of materialising design and inventing architecture. The sketch as a way of synthesising and developing architectural ideas.

1.4.4 Scale thinking as one of the great contributions from architecture to human thought and to the development of the architectural project. The previous determination of the parts in different scales, for the definition of form and relationships with different degrees of focus through the stages of the architectural project: Pre-design, Concept design, Design development, Final design, Construction documents.

1.4.5 Use of the model The three-dimensional scale model as a tool for architectural thinking, as project laboratory, for the study of the building from its conception, study of alternatives and detailing to its final definition.

1.4.6 Journey of Study and on-site sketching of great architecture as a splendid way of studying and understanding architecture and deciphering its relationship to the place of its construction. The sketch notebook, as laboratory for ideas, observations and the project's memory.

1.4.7 Competition of architectural ideas as a way to promote creativity and the medium to compare and assess different approaches and solutions to a particular architectural problem.

1.4.8 Work portfolio as the best presentation of the architectural production and way to reflect on the production of students and professional architects.

1.4.9 Development of an architectural culture. *Students learn to develop an architectural culture and the knowledge of the great treasure of buildings and paradigmatic projects of all cultures and times, which are part of the world's heritage of architecture for mankind, and constitute the background of knowledge for the contemporary architect.*

1.4.10 Promote the capacity of inquiry and experimentation. *Ability to ask relevant questions in relation to issues of architecture and to experiment with ideas, forms and spaces thru the project for the advancement, innovation and necessary evolution and sophistication of the production of the new architecture.*

1.4.11 Computer-aided design *and its possibilities as an essential tool at the service of the design and communication processes.*

1.4.12 Design process as patient search *for quality and creation of value in architecture through form, space, tectonics, sustainability and technology, in the relationship between architecture, city and environment.*

10 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 10.1 The Board commends the School's and University's commitment to research and outreach and their engagement with staff and students.
- 10.2 The Board commends the students' understanding of structural design strategy and detail for different scale buildings.
- 10.3 The Board commends the depth and breadth of urban scale studies.

11 Conditions

The following conditions of validation apply. A revisiting board will take place at a date to be agreed between the School and the RIBA to determine whether the conditions have been satisfied.

- 11.1 *GC9 Adequate knowledge of physical problems and technologies and the function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate, in the framework of sustainable development*

GC9 The graduate will have knowledge of:

- .1 principles associated with designing optimum visual, thermal and acoustic environments;*
- .2 systems for environmental comfort realised within relevant precepts of sustainable design;*
- .3 strategies for building services, and ability to integrate these in a design project.*

The work provided for the Board lacked evidence of knowledge of GC9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 as listed above.

- 11.2 *GA2.4 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.*

The work provided for the board lacked evidence of comprehensive written work, such as essays, written examination papers, monographs or dissertations.

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 procedures. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 12.1 *GC3 Knowledge of the fine arts as an influence on the quality of architectural design*

GC3 The graduate will have knowledge of:

- .1 how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design;*
- .2 the creative application of the fine arts and their relevance and impact on architecture;*
- .3 the creative application of such work to studio design projects, in terms of their conceptualisation and representation.*

The work provided for the Board lacked evidence of the application of Fine Arts methodologies to inform and communicate the design process and architectural language.

- 12.2 *GA2.2 ability to evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals.*

The work provided for the Board lacked evidence of critical reflection in the drawn and written explanation of design projects.

- 12.3 The School should consider appointing subject leads to improve the management of the programme.

- 12.4 The School should encourage students to produce complete academic portfolios of work, including process work.

We welcome the School's approach to valuing process; however the Board suggests that the School needs to better capture this through

a systematic documentation of the design genesis through development into resolution of a project.

This will ensure that a future visiting board will be able to better assess the graduate attributes. An academic portfolio should contain the following (section 4.7, RIBA Procedures Document 2011)

- ***an academic portfolio contains all the assessed work produced by a student for an academic year, and must include:***
 - ***design studio projects***
 - ***design process and development work***
 - ***drawings, sketches, and design diagrams***
 - ***sketch and final models***
 - ***larger scale 3D work***
 - ***structural, constructional, and environmental information***
 - ***essays***
 - ***dissertations***
 - ***reports and other research work***
 - ***examination scripts***

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 School should consider implementing periodic course appraisals to monitor assessment and course content.
- 13.2 The student experience during the current transition period should be monitored closely.

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 Please see paragraph 11.1 regarding the condition placed on the programme due to lack of evidence regarding GA 2.4.
- 14.2 Please see paragraph 12.2 for comments regarding Part 2 graduate attribute GA2.2.
- 14.3 Please see action point 12.4 regarding the necessity of proving complete academic portfolios to ensure that future visiting boards will be able to assess whether all graduate attributes have been met.
- 14.4 The Board was content that all Part 1 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 academic outcomes suggested a criterion was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

15.1 Please see paragraph 11.1 regarding the condition placed on the programme regarding lack of evidence of knowledge of criterion GC9

15.2 Please see paragraph 12.1 regarding GC3.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers

700 enrolments in 2017

16.2 Documentation provided

The documentation provided was not adequate in several areas. This is reflected in the conditions, action points and advice given above.

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 next full visiting board.

- Meeting with the Dean, Director of Architecture and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the Vice-Rector
- Meeting with external peers
- Meeting with staff