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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA visiting board**

**to**

**Universidad Nacional de Colombia,  
Medellín**

Date of visiting board: 8-9 May 2017

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 09 February 2018

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**  
 Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Medellín  
 Cl. 59 A #63-20  
 Medellín  
 Antioquia  
 Colombia
- 2 Leadership roles**

Edgar Arroyo Castro	Dean, Faculty of Architecture
Edgar Alonso Meneses Bedoya	Vice Dean
Pedro Ignacio Torres Arismendi	Head of Architecture and Urbanism
Jorge Fernando Torres Holguin	Head of School
- 3 Course/s offered for revalidation**  
 The Programme of Architecture
- 4 Course leaders**

Pedro Ignacio Torres Arismendi	Head of Curricular Area of Architecture and Urbanism
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- 5 Awarding body**  
 Universidad Nacional de Colombia
- 6 The visiting board**

David Dernie	chair/academic
Lilly Kudic	vice chair/academic
Alison Coutinho	practitioner
Peter Williams	practitioner
Samuel Velez	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, second revision 2014); this document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).
- 8 Proposals of the visiting board**  
 On the 09 February 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are awarded candidate course status for Part 1 and Part 2.

***The Programme of Architecture (Parts 1 & 2)***

Candidate course for validation implies that the course proposal is considered to have the potential to meet RIBA criteria, if implemented as anticipated. It is not equivalent to validation, which is only granted once the standards of work have been assessed and found satisfactory by a full board. An exploratory board may only visit a school once there is a minimum of one academic year's work from a cohort ready to consider.

A second visit will be convened at an appropriate date to consider the programme for full validation. This is likely to take place within the next two years.

**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
- 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**

Acknowledging our society's historic dichotomy between belonging to globalised powers and structures, and the regional and national context, the public university has an enormous social, political and economical responsibility. Consequently, most applicants to the programme belong to middle and lower socio-economic strata in terms of purchasing power. The curricular programme of Architecture at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Medellin campus, is offered to applicants with a middle education degree recognised by the national government, and that gain access to the University by taking an admission test that groups students in weighted profiles.

In view of the above, the programme is structured around three fundamental pillars: a closer and more appropriate response to our society in the national territory on topics related to urban and territorial architecture-space; technological adaptation to our possibilities and economic resources; to highlight and safeguard the cultural and aesthetic expressions of our surrounding with universal validity.

The Architecture Programme is designed under the parameters of: Curriculum comprehensiveness, where students have the possibility of mixing knowledge acquired from different areas and synthesise it in a project, which is understood as the design line, with emphasis lines enhancing the various profiles of future architects. Interdisciplinarity articulates different disciplinary views from the communication of ideas, concepts, methodologies, experimental procedures, field explorations, and insertion in social processes. And, lastly, the flexibility of the curriculum, whose structure allows for various alternatives that promote the free development of students' personality, and enhance the specific profiles they want to strengthen as future architects.

As a result, the programme has been structured as follows: open elective courses, which level out first-time students, and allow them to place and contextualise themselves in the world sphere. Compulsory core disciplinary courses correspond to the first approach to

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architecture that sets the baseline knowledge in areas such as techniques, representation, history, theory, and city and territory as project foundation. Compulsory disciplinary courses develop the student knowledge, intellectuality and critical thinking, and deepen the acquisition of topics particular to the discipline. The optional disciplinary component supports and promotes different profiles of future architects according to their knowledge and interest explorations.

Adapting to universal standards and in order to fulfil the requirements of the education system, the University has adopted the concept of "Credit" as the unit measuring contents in terms of classroom hours and independent work hours.

Space and reflections around it are at the core of the curricular structure of the programme. Space is conceived from the project course, which is permanently receiving comprehensive and transversal feedback from the various areas of knowledge related to architecture; the project is approached from varying levels of requirements and complexity as students advance in their learning. Such emphasis becomes the fundamental educational space for communication, reflection and exchange, where there is room for broad, relevant and coherent epistemological debates in the spirit of Colombian public education and according to the needs that society might have within the scope of architecture.

The project course is present from the beginning of the programme as a contextualisation and first approach to the concept of art and space, spatial ergonomics and introduction to basic concepts of architecture; then evolves to a second level with an introduction to concepts such as tectonics, stereotomy and formal structure; and finally ends in a design exercise of laboratories which strengthens basic concepts of space and geometry, concepts belonging to universal project architecture. After finishing the cycle of foundation project courses, students advance to a stage where projects are contextualised from their surroundings, with an analysis of territorial, urban, constructive and social responsibility by means of participatory, deductive and collaborative methodologies. The scope of design extends to optional disciplinary courses where students refine their knowledge profiles according to their explorations and interests, with a view to building bridges to postgraduate education or professional application after graduation.

The bachelor thesis, as stated in Agreement 033 of 2007, "is a special course allowing students to strengthen, apply, use and develop their research capacity, creativity and work discipline for the treatment of a specific issue, by means of the application of the knowledge and methods acquired in the development of the programme of study of their curricular programme."

Responding to the requirements of a globalised world, the University has established English as a second language, a tool that facilitates access to local, national and international mobility plans, giving students several options: joint research projects, curricular programmes in cooperation, academic term or year abroad, research internships, visiting professor exchanges, and academic or work practicums.

Graduates of the Architecture Programme are well-rounded professionals with new knowledge that from project practice develop a strong capacity to solve questions and challenges posed by professional practice in a critical and meaningful way, in line with the university's mission statement, which mandates the education of professionals willing and able to solve major problems in Colombia. In parallel, graduates are capable of performing with levels of knowledge of global validity and with the competences to face a globalised world. Additionally, graduates have the skills for entrepreneurship and innovation of new knowledge for development.

## 11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the considerable contribution made by the students to the RIBA visit, their enthusiasm, ambition, endeavour and passion for their subject and place of study.
- 11.2 The board commends the studio spaces. The faculty building offers an inspiring setting for study.
- 11.3 The new structure of the 5 year programme offers flexibility and is an intelligent response to the Government reforms (2008/9). The board anticipates its positive development, particularly in terms of its capacity to engage more specialist input in years 4 and 5.
- 11.4 Given the costs inherent in architectural education, the board commends the University's commitment to continuing provision of support for those students in most need.
- 11.5 The Board strongly commends the University's commitment to access and widening participation in Higher Education, together with the approach of the School to engage students in social agendas.

## 12 Conditions

There are no conditions

## 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 school must develop academic portfolios for each student that contains all of the assessed work for an academic year. Details of this requirement are outlined in 4.7 of the RIBA Procedures for Validation.
- 13.2 The school must clarify assessment criteria for each module and ensure its effective communication to students. Assessment procedures should include provision for moderation and external examination. Written feedback, both summative and formative, should be provided to all students for each submission, where appropriate.

13.3 The school in particular must demonstrate how criteria relating to management, practice and law are met within the academic portfolio.

13.4 The school must consider the issue of how progression is evidenced in semesters 7, 8 and 9. This is to include differentiation of assessment criteria for students at different levels of the programme.

**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.

14.1 The board advises that the school considers the balance between group work and individual work in order to facilitate how individual students meet the validation criteria.

14.2 The board advises consideration of the ways in which a greater connection between research and student projects can be evidenced in portfolios and inform the evolution of project themes.

**15 Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted: the board noted that it accurately reflects the school's response to national history, economic resources and national issues on a social and political scale.

**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**

The Board confirmed that the Programme of Architecture had the potential to meet all of the parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes.

**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 action point 13.3

**18 Other information**

**18.1 Student numbers – 575 (May 8, 2017)**

**18.2 Documentation provided**

All required RIBA documentation was provided prior the visit.