

# **Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of the West of England**

**Date of visiting board: 11 & 12 February 2021**  
**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 19 April 2021**

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

University of the West of England  
Department of Architecture and the Built Environment  
Faculty of Environment and Technology  
Frenchay Campus  
Coldharbour Lane  
Bristol  
BS16 1QY

**2 Head of the Department of Architecture**

Professor Elena Marco

**3 Courses offered for validation**

Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning  
Part 1 B.Eng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering  
Part 1 BSc (Hons) Architecture  
Part 2 MArch (including L7 Architecture Architect apprenticeship: RIBA part 2 and part 3)  
Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in Architecture

**4 Programme Directors**

Part 1 BA(Hons) Architecture and Planning: Mr Jonathan Bassindale, Ms Allison Dutoit  
Part 1 BEng(Hons) Architecture Environmental Engineering: Dr Sonja Oliveira  
Part 1 BSc(Hons) Architecture: Ms Anna Nikolaidou, Dr Merate Barakat, Mr Mike Devereux  
Part 2 MArch: Dr Fidel Meraz  
MArch Apprenticeship: Mr Andy Bourne  
Part 3: PG Cert in Professional Practice management in Architecture: Wendy Colvin

**5 Awarding body**

The University of the West of England

**6 The visiting board**

Professor Kevin Singh - Chair  
Sara Shafiei – Vice-Chair  
Musa Garba  
Peter Williams

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA validation manager – 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](http://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.

All timetabled events took place as for a physical board but remotely.

## **8 Proposals of the visiting board**

At its meeting on 19 April 2021 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed continued validation of the following:

- Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning
- Part 1 BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering
- Part 1 BSc (Hons) Architecture
- Part 2 MArch (including L7 Architecture Architect apprenticeship: RIBA part 2 and part 3)
- Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in Architecture

## **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 of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

## **10 Academic position statement (written by the School)**

Architecture at UWE Bristol is an inter-disciplinary endeavour. Working with and relating to other professional disciplines is central to our teaching programmes and academic culture, because we believe that making healthy, sustainable and meaningful environments is a co-operative enterprise. We look to prepare students that have the confidence, criticality, professional judgement and skills to expand the architect's role in the built environment. We aim to enable our future practitioners to develop the understanding and empathy that facilitates creative work across traditional boundaries.

UWE's RIBA-accredited architecture courses are part of a wider group of architectural courses. The Department offers architectural teaching within an expanded field of scholarship in environmental design. For these reasons architecture at the UWE School is conceived as a suite of undergraduate specialisms that share a core of rigorous studio-based

teaching but also ask students to relate this core-skill in architectural design to an inter-disciplinary specialism in planning, environmental engineering, building technology, detail and craft, spatial intervention or conservation. This offers our architectural students expanded opportunities for education and professional work ranging in scale from urban place making, through the technology and poetics of building design, to the intimate consideration of the objects and experiences that contribute to interior spaces. We understand these scales of thinking to be interlinked, and that each scale carries with it particular methods and skills that are not within the general purview of one single professional or profession. It is important therefore to see the undergraduate courses complying with accreditation criteria for the architectural profession – BA Hons. Architecture & Planning, B.Eng Hons. Architecture & Environmental Engineering and BSc Hons Architecture – within this wider context. They are part of a broader suite of programmes that explore the inter-disciplinary nature of architecture from a wide range of precise and particular viewpoints.

This expanded field of specialisms offers academics and students a rich texture of debate on the nature and identity of contemporary architectural practice. The post-graduate programmes extends these lines of enquiry - by exploring research specialisms at a higher level of scholarship, developing design as the architects' method of investigation, and in a critical engagement with the identity of the architect and the nature of architectural agency in contemporary society. To these ends the Masters of Architecture undertakes Live Projects (continued across the school), Design Research, and a suite of final year specialisms in healthy architecture & critical urbanism, conservation, computational architecture and social intervention. The Part 3 provides students with a collaborative forum within which to develop the confidence and reflexive judgement to work as ethically aware and thoughtful professionals.

Above all, we aim to provide a supportive environment for open architectural discourse, where staff and students can meet and make things, and establish their future direction. We hope to be a school of students and staff that can look out for each other, listen to each other, and accept criticism. Using this debate to progress and improve a rich and varied architectural education.

## **11 Commendations**

- 11.1 The Board commends the attitude and approach to professional skills / studies throughout the School and in particular the exemplary Part 3 course which offers students a very supportive and professional learning experience.
- 11.2 The Board commends the School for the career opportunities and flexibility it creates for students via the foundation course and also the matrix of inter-disciplinary courses at undergraduate level.

## **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. The university is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

#### **The following are applicable to all Part 1 and Part 2 courses**

- 13.1 As a now established provider of architectural education, the School needs to draw greater confidence from this and to critically reflect on its brief setting policy to encourage students to embrace a non-linear design process with a greater level of testing, iteration, experimentation, criticality and joy, to ensure it is evident in, and informs the design studio work.
- 13.2 The School should further promote critical analysis from a wider variety of local, national, and global precedents and the use of personal research by students to develop their personal position to inform their complete portfolio.
- 13.3 The School should formally record on-going informal discussions with External Examiners to enhance quality procedures, transparency, and reflection. This will help ensure a greater level of criticality by which to evolve the courses.
- 13.4 The Board found that the format of the student appraisal via individual testimonials to not be truly representative of the student voice. For future RIBA Boards the Student Appraisal needs to be a coordinated response led by the student body.

### **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 the School to redraft its Academic Position statement to better reflect the ethos, operation, aspirations, and spirit of the School, making clear its distinctive features and values.
- 14.2 The School is advised to reflect upon the relationship between the studio modules and the taught modules in relation to their pedagogic synthesis as well as the student experience and expected deliverables for all Part 1 and Part 2 courses.
- 14.3 The School is encouraged to maximise on its current external relationships and develop new ones to provide a further means for critical reflection.

**15 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.

**15.1 Part 1**

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning, BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering and BSc (Hons) Architecture programmes.

**15.2 Part 2**

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MArch programme.

**15.3 Part 3**

The Board confirmed that all Part 3 professional criteria were met by graduates of the PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in Architecture

**16 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.

16.1 The Board made no further comments.

**17 Other information**

**17.1 Student numbers**

Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning (ft): 131

Part 1 BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering (ft): 140

Part 1 BSc (Hons) Architecture (ft): 424

Part 2 Master of Architecture (ft & pt apprenticeship): 131

Part 3 Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice and Management in Architecture (pt) 163 currently enrolled but 47 expected to graduate in February 2021

**17.2 Documentation provided**

The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

**18 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 head of institution
- Meeting with external and professional examiners
- Meeting with staff