

---

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full Visiting Board  
to the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana**

**Date of visiting board: 21-23 April 2021  
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 07 July 2021**

- 
- 1**      **Details of institution hosting course/s** **(report part A)**  
**UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA BOLIVARIANA**  
**FACULTAD DE ARQUITECTURA**  
**Circular 1 No. 70-01, Bloque 10**  
**Medellín**  
**Colombia**
- 2**      **Senior Management Team**  
 Samuel Ricardo Velez Gonzalez      Faculty head
- 3**      **Course/s offered for validation**  
 Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2
- 4**      **Awarding body**  
 Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana
- 5**      **The visiting board**  
 Sally Stewart                      chair / academic  
 Jenny Russell                      vice chair / academic  
 Daniel Goodricke                  academic  
 Sophie Bailey                      RIBA validation manager
- 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](http://www.architecture.com).
- 7**      **Recommendation of the Visiting Board**  
 On the 07 July 2021 the RIBA Education Committee that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:  
  
 Programme of Architecture, Parts 1 and 2  
  
 The next RIBA visiting board will take place in 2026.
- 8**      **Academic position statement**  
 (Statement written by the school)  
 The Faculty of Architecture of Pontifical University of Bolivarian was founded in 1942, becoming the first Architect Training Program in the country, at a private university, and the second after the National University of Colombia in Bogotá (1936).  
  
 The Program lasts for 10 academic semesters, it is classroom modality and by belonging to the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana the Program acquires some of its distinctive features:  
  
 UPB is accredited with the multi-campus high-quality private university distinction granted by the Colombian Ministry of Education. From this distinction, the Program derives not only the prestige of its tradition, but also the administrative and academic support in its teaching, research, and extension processes.

The emphasis on humanistic training that characterizes all graduates of the University: this training imprints a distinctive feature on the UPB architects, it helps them to set human capacities that sensitize them as a citizens and as people and commits them to the social and human transformation of their environment. This emphasis on training begins with the courses of the University Basic Cycle, with contents and methodologies oriented to the development of human aptitudes, associated with the ethical sense of personal life and professional practice. They are based on knowledge of the context and commitment to social development.

The mobility opportunities that students have with other Programs of the University, and the School of Architecture and Design - to which the Program is attached - which is defined from inter-disciplinary courses of the academic Programs of the School. Architecture, Industrial Design, Graphic Design, and Costume Design; in the offer of double degree between the School Programs; and the offer of elective courses, open from each of UPB's 41 academic Programs.

Consistent with the institutional identity, the UPB Architecture Program is distinguished by its emphasis on development of project competences. It is supported by applied research and is oriented through the comprehensive training that defines the graduate profile.

Other distinctive aspects of the Program are its coherence with the Institutional Educational Project –PEI- and with the guiding principles from the Integrated Pedagogical Model. The guidelines on innovative curricula, and the institutional documents related to the articulating axis of ICTs - research and innovation - which underlie the curricular and pedagogical conception of this educational proposal.

The curriculum structure is based on skills and competences, which is specified in the graduation profile through the levels of competence formulated for each of the two cycles: the basic and the professional. The disciplinary areas (Urban Planning, History and Theory, Technique, Representation, and Research) define the learning goals that support the knowledge of the profession and support the evidence and learning results according to the established levels of competence.

Complementary to the abilities and competences, the curricular mesh is organized from three axes: the formative and applied research axis, the information and communication technologies for work in the collaborative platform's axis, and the architecture project axis.

The evaluation with rubrics and tools validates the learning results - as a transparent process for students - with a definition of the levels of competence, indicators, and descriptors for the different project dimensions and different project stages.

The research axis supports contextual research for the Project Workshops and applied research from the research group of the Program: Research Group on Architecture, Urbanism, and Landscape GAUP.

The different pedagogical modalities of the courses (virtual, presential or bimodal), and the different course methodologies for achieving the learning results: project workshops, laboratories, presential classes, and tutorials, define the relationship of the student's time (in person and autonomous) to estimate the course credits.

Curricular flexibility starting in the sixth semester, allows students to define training routes according to their professional interests. This flexibility is strengthened, among others, in the options of the project workshop 6, 7, and 8, the optional routes certifiable deepening lines of research, the in-depth courses in the research area, in academic credits from elective and optional courses , and in the modalities of professional practice.

The Integration Cycle, which is part of the flexible component, allows students to take up to 8 credits from the university's postgraduate courses, from the elective and optional credits, during the last year of their studies.

The possibility of national and international mobility in experiences such as the Professional Academic Practice (in 9th or 10th semester); and the participation of students in contests and presentations, promoted by the research group. Besides, the possibility of taking up to 49% of the Program's credits in other universities in the city, the country, and the world, through the national and international mobility agreements that the University has signed through its International Relations Office.

Throughout its history, the Faculty has established itself as a referent in local, national and international architecture practice, due to the outstanding quality and impact of the Program's graduates in the contexts where they have worked.

The quality standards of the Architecture Program at UPB, have positioned it in a place, that since 2002 has earned it the Ministry of National Education (MEN) national accreditation, and since 2000, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) international accreditation. These quality standards guarantee that the Program reaches high levels in teaching, research, and extension processes. It provides the student with a favorable environment to achieve quality in their training process, and it provides the graduates excellent prospects for performance in their professional life.

The UPB Architecture Program defines the purposes of the architect's professional training, considering the demands of the Colombian and international context - social, cultural, political, environmental, academic, and professional. From them arise the diverse and changing challenges of professional practice for architects and, according to them, the formulation of the competencies that students must develop:

- Ability to creatively and integrally project architectural and urban living spaces, to respond to society's requirements - valuing the environmental and cultural context from an aesthetic and technical perspective.

- Ability to define and interpret the technical aspects necessary for the construction of architectural and urban planning projects - from an ethical, environmental, and cultural perspective.
- Ability to recognize and value, environmental, urban, and architectural heritage, to preserve it, consolidate it, and protect it, redefining its social and cultural importance.
- Ability to represent architectural and urban planning ideas and projects, for their understanding and communication, using codes, discursive and graphic media, and models specific to the discipline.
- Ability to investigate, understand, and relate contextual information that supports project research, to support architectural and urban planning decisions.
- Ability to understand the processes related to the management and execution of architecture and urban planning projects, for their application in professional performance within the framework of current legal regulations.
- Critical and self-critical capacity facing the architect's work, to understand the ethical implications, and act within the framework of social responsibility and rules that guide the discipline.

**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 Commendations**

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 10.1 The board commends the school's preparations and arrangements for the RIBA visiting board and the extent to which UPB have overcome the potential limitations of a virtual format and provided an extensive, comprehensive and immersive platform for the visit.
- 10.2 The board commends the institution's investment in the development of teaching facilities and library and workshop facilities. This has supported the school's transformation of its learning and teaching environment. This includes both the physical environment since 2015 and the virtual, from the onset of the 2020 pandemic.
- 10.3 The board commends the level to which academic portfolios provide comprehensive documentation of students' design development,

architectural position and values, giving a sense of critical thinking which is now firmly established.

**11 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.

11.1 The school should consider how it can build upon the evident staff commitment for the programmes and sense of collegiality, and how these can build towards furthering the academic practice of social character referred to in the academic position statement.

11.2 The school should consider how it can extend its current external and international networks to enhance opportunities for students and staff.

**12. 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.

12.1 The board recognises the work that has been achieved to improve first year, but the school should remain mindful of the need to support students as they transition from the first to second year of the basic cycle.

12.2 Whilst the board recognises UPB's commitment and structure allowing students to undertake learning in other disciplines or institutions, the school should consider what support mechanisms can be put in place to allow more students to participate in this.

**13 Delivery of academic position**

The board felt that the academic position statement accurately reflected the school's ethos, identity and academic agenda.

**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.

**Graduate Attributes for Parts 1 & 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Programme of Architecture

**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.

**Graduate Criteria for Parts 1 & 2**

The Board confirmed that all the Parts 1 and 2 graduate criteria were met by graduates of the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Programme of Architecture

**16 Other information**

**16.1 Student numbers**

2020	Inscribed	Admitted	Enrolled		Graduate
			first semester	Total	
	135	89	48	956	112

**16.2 Documentation provided**

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

**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**