RIBA

Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA Full visiting board to Universidad de San Martin de Porres, Peru.

Date of visiting board: 14 - 15 August 2024
Confirmed by RIBA: 19 December 2024

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1   **Details of institution hosting courses:**
        Universidad de San Martin de Porres
        Professional School of Architecture
        Av. La Fontana
        1250 Urb. Sta. Patricia 2nd Stage
        La Molina
        Peru

2   **Courses offered for validation:**
        The Professional Programme of Architecture (5 years full time) –
        Parts 1 and 2.

3   **Head of School & Course Leads:**
        Dean of the Faculty of Engineering & Architecture
        Luis Cardenas Lucero

        Director of Architecture School
        Harold Noriega Chavez

        Course lead for Design & Urbanism - Part 1
        Mariluz Diana La Portilla Huapaya

        Course lead for Design & Urbanism - Part 2
        Gorki Mesones Vargas

4   **Awarding body:**
        Universidad de San Martin de Porres

5   **The visiting board:**
        Alexander Wright   *Chair / Academic*
        Lilly Kudic   *Academic*
        Barbara Griffin-Wright   *Practitioner*
        Renzo Monzon   *Regional Representative*
        Joshua Brooks   *RIBA Validation Manager*

6   **Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education:**
        The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation
        and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture
        (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this
        document is available at www.architecture.com.

7   **Proposals of the visiting board:**
        On 19 December 2024, the RIBA confirmed initial validation of the following
        course:

        The Professional Programme of Architecture (5 years full time) –
        Parts 1 and 2.

        The next visit to USMP will be in 2029.

8   **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

9   Academic position statement (written by school)

At the Professional Programme of Architecture of the Universidad de San Martín de Porres (San Martin de Porres University), the pedagogy of teaching is based on developing in students the aspects that make up our mind: unconscious, subconscious, and conscious, that is, the three basic components of the human being: body, emotions, and mind.

Thus, the training can be divided into three experiences organised over the five years of the programme or, in other words, over the ten workshops that make up a continuous process in which the emotional-mental structure of the student is addressed. The objective is that each workshop achieves the maximum of the students' creative possibilities, regardless of their living conditions or their place of origin. Each student has an inner creative force that must be rescued.

At the beginning of this process, the aim is that students open their unconscious through exercises to perceive light and to get to know and learn the three dimensions. This leads to the beginning of the space–form–function experience. The process takes the role of the subconscious, with which the abstract condition of the creation of the space–form–function experience and the complex thinking are handled, allowing the merger of these three components. Finally, this three-component triangle closes with the formation of the conscious. At this point, abstraction no longer exists. Every creation must now be objective and be materialised in a geometrical, measurable, and buildable framework.

The structure of teaching in our Professional Programme comprises three objectives: Architecture, Urbanism and Sustainability, based on a humanistic vision in which the architect's practice is addressed as a service to the human being and not as a science or engineering, because its components are an art, the art of giving architecture a relationship of continuity with nature and the happiness of the appreciation of life.

Nature is based on a process of evolution of the components of creation, giving it stages with an intelligence adapted to its physical environment to develop with a single objective: to serve the harmony and balance of the biosphere, the atmosphere, and the structure of all that is alive, of which the human being is a part.

Architecture is born accompanying this process, which is organic and is linked to spiritual development of the human being. Therefore, the true foundation is directly related to the growth of the human being's consciousness.

For this reason, the ancient centres of architectural education were communities managed by teachers. The last ones were Bauhaus and Taliesin.

At Taliesin the same processes were followed, but based on the ideas of G.I. Gurdjieff, who with more objectivity establishes the laws of the processes that are known as the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. The Law of Three begins with three vibrations called do, re, mi, then establishes an interval and then continues with four more vibrations called fa, sol, la, si. The first three must occur voluntarily, and the subsequent four develop by themselves, following the process because the information is already in the subconscious; students must just be open to the experience arising from the confrontation with the proposal.

In the last formative stage, wisdom and knowledge come together and give rise to consciousness. There is a fundamental difference between wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom is the accumulated information. Knowledge is the experience itself. Wisdom does not include knowledge, but, when knowledge is given in a correct form, it includes wisdom. One who is wise does not know, but one who knows is wise.

The distribution of the workshops as the first line of teaching, according to each of the three stages described, and the architectural aspects studied in depth in each one of them, are shown in the figure below. The workshop is eminently practical; it is not theoretical. Practice includes theory, following the pattern of knowledge and wisdom. In this process there are two moments called intervals, in which the students are free to confront themselves, and to create and perceive their own creativity, relying on what has been acquired by their bodies (instinct), minds (cognitive thinking) and emotions (intuition).

Parallel to the workshops, two courses are strengths of our Professional Programme: Construction and Structures. The course of Construction is taught in a practical way in a University campus and makes students get interested in construction trough fieldwork, since they lay foundations, footings, slabs, columns, beams, castings, etc.
They perform these tasks using personal protection equipment, so that in their professional life they can take responsibility for their own safety or that of the personnel they manage.
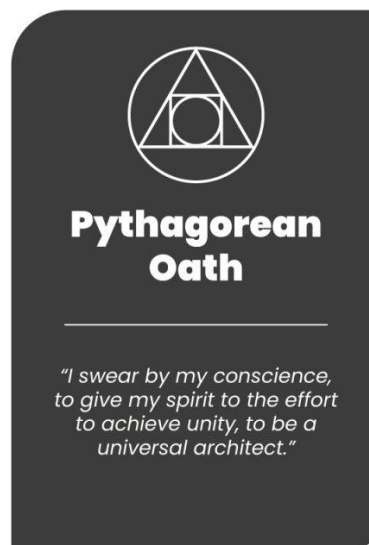
The course of Structures is taught using scale models that are subjected to stress tests. In this way, the preliminary sizing of structures becomes part of the students' intuitive experience. Engineers will only make adjustments. The models are built at the same campus.

The second line of teaching – Urbanism – is developed through visits to settlements in different places of Peru, with the objective of analysing and investigating their origin, foundation, development, and expansion. Students must prepare a group essay based on this exercise and publish it in a book that will remain in our library as property of the Professional Programme. Visits are made to towns and cities with climates and contexts different from those of the city of Lima.

This personal experience of the different anthropological features that come from the abandonment of the countryside or rural life gives each student a unique formation, because the differences in social and cultural organization can only be known through a personal encounter that marks the life of each student.

The third line of teaching is Sustainability (the architect's main task), and it has two aspects – the ethical aspect and the practical-theoretical aspect –, since it is not enough to apply rules and regulations that have been manipulated to obtain economic gains for some companies, especially those related to housing densities, deforming the concept of social housing, the content of which has been lost.

In order to give the students an identity and make them engage to act ethically, we have created an initiation ceremony where we make students take an oath called the Pythagorean Oath, similar to the one taken by physicians, known as the Hippocratic Oath, which gives birth to their conscience and commitment to themselves and thus makes a sustainable professional practice possible.

Pythagorean Oath

"I swear by my conscience, to give my spirit to the effort to achieve unity, to be a universal architect."

Juramento Pitagórico 2024.pdf

At our Professional Programme, we seek to improve the relationship between research and teaching through the research centres of the School of Engineering and Architecture, such as the Instituto de Vivienda, Urbanismo y Construcción (IVUC) (Institute of Housing, Urbanism and Construction), which develops, with the support of students and professors of architecture, various social projects investigating the best use of vernacular materials from different regions of the country and designing projects of social interest with real needs; the Centro de Bambú (Bamboo Centre), implemented by the IVUC to deepen research into this abundant construction resource whose multiple qualities and applications have yet to be discovered, and the Innovation and Development Laboratory where students can use state-of-the-art equipment to create three-dimensional prototypes with designs that give free rein to their imagination.

In this way, the architecture students of the Professional Programme of Architecture of the Universidad de San Martín de Porres complete their studies with a profound knowledge of their country, identify with its social and territorial problems and are capable of providing urban and architectural solutions thanks to the advances of technology, as they have developed creative sensitivity in a process that starts from a perceptual, affective and reflective knowledge as a basis for the design of imaginative and original projects that respond coherently to the real needs of the users they serve, who are the main beneficiaries of a quality architecture.

10   Commendations
The visiting board made the following commendations:

10.1   The RIBA Visiting Board commends the hard work evident in terms of expanding the school and improving the student facilities.

10.2   The RIBA Visiting Board commends the care and dedication demonstrated by the staff with regards to student welfare and learning.

11   Conditions
There are no conditions.

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

12.1   The School should provide confirmation of what process for external review is to be put in place, with particular reference to 3.9 of the RIBA Validation Procedures document:

"The examiners (or external assessors) produce a report for the institution, commenting on academic quality and best practice, coverage of the graduate attributes and themes and Values, and minimum pass standards".

12.2   The School should ensure that the portfolios in all years are prepared to include comprehensive evidence of the conception and evolution of the design, and the design process. Ideally this should include hand drawn sketches and evidence of the development of the architectural idea.

For future portfolio samples, consideration needs to be given to their format and ease of access, to ensure the evidence presented is readily accessible.

12.3   The School should take steps to ensure that within the design projects there is sufficient opportunity for individual architectural expression. This should be evidenced within the sample portfolios provided to future visiting boards, and should include critical evaluation of the architectural aesthetics.

12.4   The School should develop a policy with respect to the use of artificial intelligence in teaching, coursework and assessments.

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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 We suggest the School reviews the space required to support studio culture. This should include dedicated spaces for students to work and socialise.

13.2 We suggest that the School considers the comfort of students within studio environment, with particular reference to ensuring that the furniture is suitable for long and sustained periods of work.

13.3 We suggest the School keeps the software provision under continuous review to ensure it remains current and suited to the educational needs of the students.

13.4 We suggest that the School includes, within the history and theory element of the curriculum, additional material that covers the architecture of Peru and allows space for the presentation and discussion of issues in current architectural practice.

13.5 We suggest that the School encourages students to provide, as part of their final design projects, three dimensional representations which illustrate and celebrate the synthesis of technical and aesthetic considerations.

13.6 We advise that the School establishes a formal process by which student representatives are identified from each year of study. We suggest that the student voice is incorporated within the decision making process for curriculum development and which addresses aspects of the student experience.

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 Part 1
The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Professional Programme of Architecture.

Graduate Attributes for Part 2
The Board confirmed that all of the Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Professional Programme of Architecture.

15   Review of work against Themes and Values
It should be noted that where the Visiting Board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a T&V were clearly not met), commentary is supplied.
Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a T&V was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

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Themes and Values for Part 1
The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by
graduates of the Professional Programme of Architecture.

Themes and Values for Part 2
The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by
graduates of the Professional Programme of Architecture.

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School - 2023/2024)
The school enrols approximately 453 students across the five-year
programme:
Year 1: *80 students*
Year 2: *80 students*
Year 3: *85 students*
Year 4*: 90 students*
Year 5: *85 students*

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

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:

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Students
- Head of Institution
- External Examiners
- Staff