
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to
The University of Sheffield**

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- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s** **(report part A)**
 School of Architecture
 University of Sheffield
 Arts Tower
 Western Bank
 Sheffield S10 2TN
 United Kingdom
- 2 Head of Architecture Group**
 Karim Hadjri Head of School
- 3 Course/s offered for validation**
Part I
 BA Architecture (3 years)
 BA Architecture and Landscape Architecture (3 years)
 MEng Structural Engineering and Architecture (4 years)
- Part II**
 MArch Architecture (2 years)
 MArch Architecture and Town & Regional Planning (2 years)
 MArch Collaborative Practice (2 years)
 MArch Architecture and Landscape Architecture (2 years)
- 4 Course leader**
 Simon Chadwick part 1
 Leo Care part 2
- 5 Awarding body**
 University of Sheffield
- 6 The visiting board**
 David Howarth practitioner/chair
 Virginia Rammou academic/vice chair
 Gill Lambert practitioner
 Julian Manev student
 Sophie Bailey 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, and effective from September 2011); this document is available at www.architecture.com.
- 8 Recommendation of the Visiting Board**
 On the 9 February 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:
- Part I**
 BA Architecture (3 years)
 BA Architecture and Landscape Architecture (3 years)
 MEng Structural Engineering and Architecture (4 years)

Part II

MArch Architecture (2 years)

MArch Architecture and Town & Regional Planning (2 years)

MArch Collaborative Practice (2 years)

MArch Architecture and Landscape Architecture (2 years)

The next RIBA visiting board will take place in: 2022

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

Built out of penny donations from local residents, Sheffield University benefits from a strong sense of attachment to its local and global community and a conviction that social responsibility is at the heart of what it does. The University places great emphasis on the balanced and ethically driven 'Sheffield Graduate' and 'Sheffield Academic' as its model. The School of Architecture's own concerns for social and environmental responsibility accord with those of the University.

Our School of Architecture was founded in 1908 and is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences. We have a proven reputation for excellence and innovation in teaching (joint first for undergraduate teaching in the UK National Student Survey). The Architects' Journal Top 100 Survey rates us as one of the best UK Schools, and we are the only School consistently within the top five as ranked across all the main UK league tables. Our No.4 position in the UK 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the QS World Rankings 2017 confirms the School as a world-class centre for architectural research.

We further architecture as a discipline of thought and reflection, investigating the making of architecture that is inclusive and sustainable as well as spatially and materially sophisticated. Our programmes promote engagement with communities, most famously through our Live Projects initiatives. Through our teaching, our students become reflective and rigorous and entrepreneurial, with the skills and critical acuity to flourish in a world of continuous change.

From the successes of Live Projects, in 2015 we set up Live Works; the only permanent University-funded 'Urban Room' in the UK. Based in Sheffield city centre, Live Works combines research, teaching and graduate employment to foster better citizen participation in the

development of neighbourhoods, towns, and cities. Our partners in Live Works include Sheffield City Council, Yorkshire Artspace, Friends groups, local entrepreneurs and artists.

Live Works employs students and graduates to provide design and research to community, public and third-sector organisations. In the past year Live Works has employed 16 graduates and students and engaged nearly 6,000 members of the public.

Central to our programmes is a strong and vibrant studio culture. Within our framework of supportive guidance, our students can develop their own critical position, agenda and ethos towards studying and practicing architecture.

We offer a variety of professionally accredited courses and routes, with undergraduate programmes organised in a year system and MArch in vertical studios combining Y5 and Y6 students. Our professionally accredited interdisciplinary Dual discipline programmes with Landscape, Town and Regional Planning, and Structural Engineering are cited as best practice by the University and the strengths of these programmes have been recognised through student, employer, and external examiner acclaim.

Our students' work has been recognised regionally through RIBA Yorkshire Awards and nationally through Duke of Gloucester CIC awards and Design Council 'Ones to Watch'. Our active student body includes the current RIBA student representative and founders of the newly formed Humanitarian Architecture Society. In 2017 our students presented at UN Habitat III. We are one of four Royal Academy of Engineering Centres of Excellence in Sustainable Design in the UK.

We launched our pioneering MArch Collaborative Practice in 2015 which is a practice-based route in which students 'earn as they learn' in Year 5 before returning to full-time education for Year 6. This is supported by over 30 distinguished practices, many of whose founders are alumni of the School. Students on the programme critically analyse their live practice experience and reflect on contemporary issues within the discipline.

Our support and resources for technology are regularly rejuvenated and improved; recently with a new 3D printing suite and Virtual Reality software, and a digital studio base to combine digital and crafted modelling. We have introduced BIM and building simulation (SIM) teaching, exposing students to a range of BIM, simulation and fabrication skills. Our Complex Material Assembly methodology was introduced in MArch during the 2013-14 and has been applauded by external examiners and students alike.

The School maintains strong links with leading practices, which support new course development, teaching, external examining, and research. The School is part of the RIBA Mentoring Scheme for the BA Year 2 involving over 30 practices. Our student society, SUAS, run a guest lecture series, and have been voted 'Best Student Society' two years running. Our visiting professor schemes have been expanded and they

integrate with all our courses, in addition to the prestigious Graham Willis Visiting Professorship. Mindful of the changing circumstances for student and university funding, the School has developed a strong alumni programme including Alumni Scholarships and a variety of broader alumni contributions from practice that add value to the life of the School. We have ERASMUS exchange partners and ERASMUS+ projects with leading Schools of Architecture, in addition to MoUs partnerships in China and Mexico.

Interdisciplinary research is a priority for us, borne out by our successful REF2014 submission with Landscape and Urban Studies and Planning. Research is framed in three research groups: Design, Engagement and Practice; People, Environments and Performance; Space, Cultures and Politics. The School is particularly known for its strong research specialisms that inform teaching at both UG and PG levels in the area of Acoustics, Lighting, Sustainability, Inclusive Design, Participation and Urban Environments. Practice-based research is also a key strength of our School through the work of our award-winning practitioner staff members and through the PhD by Design programme. Our Graduate School is shared with Landscape and has 83 PhD candidates studying for practice-based or traditional research.

We encourage students to consciously reflect on their education and to approach ARB/RIBA criteria with a questioning, critical perspective. Our courses are very ambitious; we hope to inspire students to become leaders and to be able to navigate increasing levels of complexity and change in the profession. Our students' critical understanding of architectural, social and environmental issues is the key imperative of our validated programmes, as demonstrated by the achievements of our graduates who become reflective and skilled practitioners and incisive researchers.

Our studio culture is central to what the School's working, underpinned by a peer review system that encourages independence of thought and consideration for the ideas, agendas and ambitions of others. Students value the accessibility of tutors in the School and perhaps the achievement that we value the most is having developed a context of collaborative endeavour and mutual respect in which students achieve meaningful work.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the schools commitment to inter-disciplinary professional education through the range of dual awards offered at BA and MArch level.
- 11.2 The board commends the schools commitment to developing a complimentary route into the profession through the Collaborative Practice MArch.
- 11.3 The board commends the open and collegiate culture of the school with staff, students and external examiners all contributing to the ongoing development of the courses.

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. 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 ensure that 6th year MArch Collaborative Practice students are fully supported in their return to the school. This is especially the case for students who are new to the school.
- 12.2 At MArch, the school should ensure students carry out architectural investigations at a physical, material, spatial and aesthetic level alongside their research. This will contribute to the richness of design propositions.

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 board advises the school to take the opportunity to re-draft their academic position statement to more clearly and concisely reflect the ethos of the school.
- 13.2 The board understands that the school has reached an optimum size for the space they have. The board therefore advises the school to continue to deliver their plans for expanding facilities, in particular the relocation of workshops into the building and additional floorspace to accommodate any future increases in student numbers.
- 13.3 The board advises the school to encourage students through the use of project briefs to further embed a culture of making at all scales and at all stages of the design process.
- 13.4 The board advises the school to ensure that the Reflective Design module in MArch Collaborative Practice demonstrates architectural design at an appropriate scale, complexity and resolution.

14 Delivery of academic position
Please see advice point 13.1 for details.

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.

Graduate Attributes for Parts 1 and 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 and Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates.

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.

Graduate Criteria for Parts 1 and 2

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 and Part 2 criteria were met by graduates.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

Part I

BA Architecture (3 years)

Year 1	113
Year 2	117
Year 3	96

BA Architecture and Landscape Architecture (3 years)

Year 1	13
Year 2	13
Year 3	5

MEng Structural Engineering and Architecture (4 years)

Year 1	26
Year 2	17
Year 3	7
Year 4	19

Part II

MArch Architecture (2 years)

Year 1	49
Year 2	56

MArch Architecture and Town & Regional Planning (2 years)

Year 1 1

Year 2 1

MArch Collaborative Practice (2 years)

Year 1 13

Year 2 13

MArch Architecture and Landscape Architecture (2 years)

Year 1 3

Year 2 2