

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board
to the Bartlett School of
Architecture
University College London
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee
11 July 2007**

**Bartlett School of Architecture
Faculty of the Built Environment
University College London**

Part One: BSc Honours Degree in Architecture

Part Two: Graduate Diploma in Architecture

**Part Three: Certificate in Professional Practice &
Management in Architecture**

Date of Visiting Board: 22 - 23 February 2007

1. Information About the Courses

1.1 Courses offered for validation

Part One: The University of London BSc Honours Degree in Architecture (three years full-time)
 Part Two: University College London Graduate Diploma in Architecture (two years full-time)
 Part Three: The Bartlett School of Architecture Certificate in Professional Practice & Management in Architecture (six to twelve months part-time)

1.2 Address of the Institution where the course is delivered

The Bartlett School of Architecture
 University College London
 Wates House
 22 Gordon Street
 London WC1H 0QB
 Tel: 020 7679 4821
 Fax: 020 7679 4831
 W: www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk

1.3 Name of Awarding Bodies:

Part One: University of London
 Part Two: University College London
 Part Three: Bartlett School of Architecture

1.4 Dean of Faculty of the Built Environment & Chairman of the School of Architecture

Professor Christine Hawley

1.5 Head of the School of Architecture

Professor Iain Borden

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on Thursday 22 and Friday 23 February 2007 were:

Kate Heron	(Chair)
Professor Jim Low	(Vice Chair)
Stuart Barlow	
Peter Beacock	
Dr Robert Felix	
Hilary Holloway	(Co-Professional Member)
Cany Ash	(Regional Representative)
Dhruv Sookhoo	(Student Member)

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk (RIBA Validation Coordinator) was in attendance as Secretary to the Board.

3. Procedures & Criteria for the Visit

3.1 The Visiting Board was carried out under the "RIBA Procedures for the Validation of UK Courses and Examinations in Architecture", published Sept 2003, effective from September 2003 (as amended at RIBA Validation Committee 19.05.2005), the "RIBA Criteria for Validation", published March 2002, effective from September 2003, and the RIBA Descriptions and Regulations for the Recognition of Courses and Examinations in Professional Practice & Management, (Part Three), published November 2003.

For more information see www.architecture.com.

4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board

4.1 At its meeting on 11 July 2007 the Education Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects confirmed:

Continued Validation of:

Part One: The University of London BSc Honours Degree in Architecture (three years full-time)

Part Two: University College London Graduate Diploma in Architecture (two years full-time)

Part Three: The Bartlett School of Architecture Certificate in Professional Practice & Management in Architecture (six to twelve months part-time)

4.2 The next full Visiting Board should take place in 2011.

5. Recommendation of the Visiting Board to the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Construction Industry Council & the EU Directive

5.1 The Visiting Board recommends to the Commonwealth Association of Architects that the CAA continue with their accreditation of the Part Two qualification.

5.2 The Visiting Board was satisfied that the Part One course met the Construction Industry Council Common Learning Outcomes for Degree Courses in the Built Environment.

5.3 The Visiting Board recommends to the ARB that the Part One and Part Two course together met all points of the EU Directive subject

6. Criteria for Validation

6.1 On the basis of the academic portfolios examined, the Visiting Board was satisfied that all graduates from all the courses listed in 4.1 satisfied all the Criteria for Validation (which are held in common by the RIBA for validation and the ARB for prescription).

7. Standards

7.1 A range of work from the previous year of the courses listed in 4.1 above was inspected during the visit and was found to meet the required standards.

8. Conditions of Validation

8.1 There were no special conditions of validation.

9. Standard Requirements of Recognition

9.1 RIBA recognition of all courses/qualifications is dependent upon:

- i. external examiners being appointed for the course;
- ii. any significant changes to the course being submitted to the RIBA;
- iii. any change of award title, and the effective date of the change, being reported to the RIBA so that,

- where appropriate, recognition may formally be transferred to the new title by the RIBA;
- iv. submission to the RIBA of the names of students passing the course listed in 4.1.

10. Summary of the Recommendations, Advice & Commentary Contained in the Full Report

10.1 The Bartlett School of Architecture enjoys a clear identity characterised by the diversity, exploration, experimentation and innovation evident in its research activities and students' work. Its aspirations for excellence in teaching and research are driven by energetic, enthusiastic and talented staff and students. The strong research culture influences and informs the teaching directly and indirectly. Its position in UCL provides a wealth of specialist expertise from other disciplines on which it can draw and its reputation and Central London location allow the active participation of practitioners in all its activities. The School is also actively building links with the local community.

10.2 Specific strengths of the School included:

- The quality and volume of the work produced by students
- The commitment and ambition of students and staff
- The mutual appreciation and respect between students and staff. Overall staff-student relationships are very good.
- The loyalty to the Bartlett demonstrated by staff and students

- The overall sense of ownership and belonging in the individual units.
- There is a synergy between the strength, enthusiasm and commitment of staff and that of the students.
- The School is settling down well under its present head.
- Staff and students recognise the value of being a part of University College London. Students see the value of being part of UCL as it provides access to expert advice in other departments. This increases the students' confidence. The School produces confident students who appreciate and are able to maximise their situation in Central London.
- The support of University senior management with regard to recent funding challenges and the commitment to increasing and enhancing the School's accommodation.
- The School and University's commendable and positive links to its local community.
- The inclusivity of decision-making
- The School's positive response to research and the interdepartmental/Faculty approach to research strategy.
- The Board commended the institution of the summer school which provides opportunities to introduce school students to higher education.
- The gender balance of the staff is impressive throughout the School.

10.3 Recommendations

The Board has made the following recommendation to the School. The RIBA expects the Institution to report on action taken or planned as a result of the recommendations in the annual monitoring returns

submitted by the School and in the mid term review. Failure by an Institution to act on the recommendation, or provide the RIBA with a clear rationale for not doing so, may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

- 10.3.1 The Board noted from earlier Visiting Board reports that the facilities have been under pressure for a long time, as they were accommodating a greater number of students than they had initially been designed for, although it also noted that student numbers have remained level since the last Visiting Board. This situation is acknowledged at School, Faculty and University level. Students expressed concerns that the lack of facilities compromised their aspirations and potentially the quality of work, in particular as they believed they were losing the connectivity attained by being able to walk through others' crits. The Board recommends that the School continue in its endeavours to secure more suitable accommodation. The Board was pleased with the commitment from the University to provide a new building but recommends short term capital investment to increase the crit space.
- 10.3.2 The Board recommends that more than one External examiner should have responsibility for looking at the fourth year work and the Advanced Architectural Design Project, particularly as the end of fourth year is a progression stage.
- 10.3.3 The Board noted that that the Part Three comes within the Faculty QA framework but not within the University's. The School has appointed an External Examiner which is a welcome development. The School should continue to

develop External examiners in line with UCL QA and QAA guidelines.

Architecture was a discipline audit trail for the QAA's institutional audit in March 2005. The Board noted and supported the recommendation in the Institutional Audit summary that "It would be desirable for UCL to: complement its intention of reviewing the quality and accuracy of programme specifications by a programme designed to identify best practice and convince departmental level academic staff of programme specifications' potential to enhance the student learning experience". (QAA UCL Institutional Audit Summary, March 2005).

10.4 **Advice**

The Visiting Board offers the following advice to the Institution on desirable, but not essential improvements, which it is felt would assist course developments and/or raise standards:

- 10.4.1 Although it does not come within the remit either of the RIBA or its Visiting Boards to make stipulations regarding the type of award made or the degree awarding body, the Board suggests that the School give consideration to making the Part Three a UCL award.

11. **Summary of Previous Visiting Board Report**

- 11.1 The last Visiting Board to the Bartlett School of Architecture took place on 26 to 28 February 2003.

The Board recommended that: Continued Validation was given to

Part One: the 3 year full-time course and associated examination leading to the award of the University of London BSc Honours Degree in Architecture, Planning and Environmental Studies - Architecture route (last intake 2001)

Part One: the 3 year full-time course and associated examination leading to the award of the BSc (Honours) Architecture of the University of London (first intake 2002).

Part Three: the Bartlett Certificate in Professional Practice and Management in Architecture (part-time), taken on completion of a minimum of two years practical training.

The 2003 Board recommended that Conditional Continued Validation was given to:

Part Two: the two year full-time course and associated examinations leading to the award of the University College London, Diploma in Architecture.

To satisfy the condition, the School was asked to provide documentation which demonstrates that all Part Two graduates will in future meet the RIBA ARB Validation Criteria, whatever unit or units they have studied. The School was also asked to provide Examination Regulations for the Diploma course, including a clear specification of the role of the External Examiners. It was proposed that the implementation of these measures would be checked by a revisit by a sub-group at the time of the 2005 assessment boards.

The report was considered by the Validation Committee in December 2003. The Committee was confident that it fully addressed the concerns raised by the Visiting Board and agreed to recommend to the RIBA Educational Committee that the condition be discharged. RIBA Education Committee accepted this recommendation, the condition was thus discharged and there was, therefore, no subsequent sub-group visit.

11.2 Summary of the Previous Visiting Board Report
The 2003 Visiting Board report included the following statements:

"The visit has shown that the School continues to develop all its courses offering its students a rich mix of ideas, experiences, skills and information."

"Some of the design work seen in student portfolios was of the highest quality."

"The teaching of history and theory represents one of the School's real strengths. In addition to impressive essays and dissertations, the student portfolios seen by the Board at both part One and Part Two levels were typically rich in contextual work."

"The Part Three Course, described by the last Visiting Board as well organised with excellent coverage and rigorous assessment, has been further enhanced. It is, without question, an impressive course."

"The School needs to instigate procedures to ensure that all Diploma students upon graduation satisfy all the Part Two Validation Criteria."

"The School needs the support of its parent College if its ambitious plans are not to be thwarted by the poor quality of the spaces it inhabits, coupled with its general lack of space."

12. Commentary

12.1 Self-Appraisal and Developments since the Last Visit

The Board considered the School's Critical Self-Appraisal was overly descriptive and sold the School short. It had missed an opportunity to describe critically developments and achievements at the School since the last Visiting Board. Very open and transparent discussions with management and staff enabled the Board to gain a clear understanding of the substantial developments since the last Visiting Board.

There have been significant structural changes at senior management level since the last visit. The School benefits from good joint leadership shared between a triumvirate of heads, each with a specific role; Chairman of the Bartlett School of Architecture, Head of the School of Architecture and Director of Architectural Design. An Architecture Management Group, comprising the Chairman, Head of School, course leaders and subject area leaders has been established. Decision-making is made more collectively and democratically than previously. The School is settling down well under its new leadership.

The implementation of the Advanced Architectural Design Project in Year Four is of particular significance. This seeks to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate that they are satisfying the RIBA/ARB criteria, thus freeing the fifth year for more explorative work.

The School has responded positively to concerns about progression rates. Pastoral care has been enhanced, including the implementation of a mentoring scheme, Adjustments have been made to the timetabling of the Part One course to help reduce pressure on students.

The Board welcomes UCL's Quality Assurance initiatives, which are now more in line with those of other institutions. The School is actively involved in the development of these, having agreed to take part in an annual monitoring pilot and is finding it a useful exercise.

The newly established summer school has been successful in introducing students to higher education who may not otherwise have considered it.

The University and School are working closely with Camden Council (the borough in which UCL is based) on a number of projects.

12.2 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit

The Board would like to thank the staff and students for their kind hospitality during the visit. All documentation was forwarded to the RIBA well in advance. The Board found the Base Room documentation very useful, in particular the course booklets and student handbooks. All

documentation was admirably succinct but the Board wishes especially to commend the Year Four guide. In retrospect it would have been very useful to have received these particular items (course booklets and student handbooks) in advance of the visit.

The Board found the Part Two mapping documentation repetitive and initially experienced some difficulty in trying to reconcile the mapping with the course documentation as there was a lack of clarity. However, discussions with students confirmed that they clearly understood the aims and objectives of the programme.

The portfolios were very well labelled and grouped enabling the Board to navigate them easily. The Board would have liked to see more sketchbooks for Part One and Part Two work. Staff were willing to provide additional information and clarification whenever necessary.

12.2.1 Record of Academic portfolios sampled

BSc Honours Degree in Architecture (Part One)

Year 1: 3 lowest pass, 2 middle and 2 high pass (from a cohort of 61 who passed)

Year 3: the lowest pass portfolios from each of 8 units plus 2 middle and 2 high pass portfolios (from a cohort of 51) All the year 3 portfolios included work from year 2 of the course.

Graduate Diploma (Part Two):

Year 5: the lowest pass portfolios from each of 13 units plus 3 middle and 3 high pass portfolios from a cohort of

81 who passed. All the year 5 portfolios included work from year 4 of the course.

Certificate in Professional Practice and management in Architecture (Part Three)

For Part Three, the Board examined the complete assessed work of 3 lowest pass, 2 middle pass and 2 high pass candidates from the two most recent cohorts (48 and 72).

12.3 Responses made to the previous Visiting Board report (and to reports of any revisits) and external examiner comments.

The School has genuinely and thoughtfully taken on board comments from External Examiners and previous Visiting Boards. The Board would have found it helpful if the School had provided a report on the Advanced Architectural Design Project and how the compliance process has developed, although discussions with staff, students and external examiners during the visit provided ample evidence of its worth. The attitude of the staff towards this is positive and it is clear that students value it. The School is ably demonstrating that this is a good vehicle for demonstrating compliance, and this in a much more holistic manner than previously. The School encourages recruitment of students from other Schools of Architecture because it helps create a challenging working environment for students.

Responding to External Examiners' reports appears to be a relatively informal process, but the External Examiners confirmed that the School does take this very seriously

and responds assiduously, although this is often not formally recorded.

12.4 Context of the validated courses within the wider provision of the School

The validated courses are run by the Bartlett School of Architecture, which is one of five schools forming the Faculty of the Built Environment, the others being Construction and Project Management, the Development Planning Unit, Planning, and Graduate Studies. In addition to the validated programmes, the School of Architecture also offers an MSc in Urban Design, M.Arch Architectural Design, M.Phil/PhD by Architectural Design, M.Phil/PhD by Text. The four other Schools offer a huge range of taught and research postgraduate degrees.

The School also offers the non-vocational BSc Architectural Studies, to which students can transfer at the end of the first, second or third year of the BSc (Architecture) Part One if appropriate. This does not carry exemption from Part One. The School's position within the Faculty of the Built Environment and UCL as a whole provide a wealth of expertise upon which staff and students can draw and tremendous scope for interdepartmental and cross-faculty working.

12.5 Detailed Commentary on the Part One course: BSc Honours Degree in Architecture

12.5.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives

The strategic objectives of the Part One course were clearly defined in the course documentation and demonstrably being achieved.

12.5.2 Course design and content

The Board considered that course design and content were good. The first year of the BSc (Hons) is a single studio year. At the beginning of the second year students join one of eight vertical design units, in which they remain for a year. Second and third year students are taught together. At the beginning of the academic year, the unit masters (both BSc and Diploma units) make a presentation to the students, outlining the history of the units, that particular year's themes and the staff involved. Students may choose three units in order of preference and are then interviewed by unit staff. It is acknowledged that this can be a stressful experience as students are committed to securing their first choice. Around 95% of students are successful in doing so; a 'clearing' system operates to accommodate those who do not. If the two main processes are not successful in placing a student, staff may place them where they feel it is most appropriate. Most students appear to be happy with the result. The School tracks performance against choice of unit, but not against students' initial selection of their preferred unit. Students join a different unit in their third year.

Unit masters are aware of the requirement to meet the criteria, but may choose the means of achieving these outcomes in discussion with the course leaders.

The School has ambitions for its course which are clearly being achieved. This is a great strength of the undergraduate programme. The Board perceived the ambition driving the work of the Part One students, which was evident even at the lower end of achievement. It generates a large volume of work which is of good quality and a high standard. The Board was impressed by the consistency in quality of the students' work, in particular the level of exploration and the variety of media used.

12.5.3 *Quality and coverage of the syllabus (including balance and integration between design/non-design work)*

- *Design*

The Board was satisfied that all the Part One Validation Criteria in the area of Design were being met by all graduates from the BSc Honours Degree in Architecture.

Students' work is ambitious and inventive and these aspirations inform the design. Students are encouraged to explore and make things and there is a great deal of demonstration of making.

The first year of the course is particularly commendable. At a very early stage it fosters ambition which can be seen in the quality and amount of work.

The quality of drawn work, using traditional graphics, is very high. The Board applauds the School's requirement that students learn to draw by hand. However, the Board found that in many cases actual projects were not set in context. There was often a lack of even a notional context;

in particular, there were few in a constrained urban context.

- *Technology & Environment*

The Board was satisfied that all the Part One Validation Criteria in the area of Technology & Environment were being met by all graduates from the BSc Honours Degree in Architecture.

It is in this area that the value of model making is particularly noticeable as it can foster an in-depth understanding of a technology through the development of a component, from initial design drawings through into three-dimensional models.

- *Cultural Context*

The Board was satisfied that all Validation Criteria in the area of Cultural Context were being met by all graduates from the BSc Honours Degree in Architecture.

The Board found that work in this area was beautifully produced, with crafting even in the written work and the whole body of work inspired and infused with ambition. There is a great deal of written work to support and underpin the designs. However, as observed earlier, there was a lack of context, particularly urban context.

- *Communication*

The Board was satisfied that all Part One Validation Criteria in the area of Communication were being met by all graduates from the BSc Honours Degree in Architecture.

Although satisfied that the criteria were being met, the Board considered that there was not enough text to support the designs. A wide range of media is used. Drawing work and rendering are excellent. The Board applauded the use of traditional graphic skills which have been re-introduced to the programme and are compulsory.

- *Management Practice & Law*

The Board was satisfied that all the Part One Validation Criteria in the area of Management Practice & Law were being met by all graduates from the BSc Honours Degree in Architecture

This is rigorous throughout the School. Students are introduced to professional studies in Year 1 through a dedicated module which is consolidated by a further specialist module in Year 3. Students are taught with students from other disciplines.

- *Preparation for Professional Experience*

Preparation for this starts with the modules described in the preceding paragraph. The support for the year out is excellent, at the end of which students receive a Year Out Certificate (see paragraph 12.9).

12.5.4 *Progression within the course*

Progression within the course has been a significant issue within the School. There has been a high level of drop out, particularly after Year One. The School is aware of this and the situation is improving. The School does not officially know the destination of students who leave architecture but believes that many transfer to other UCL courses. The documentation that the Board received did

not make the reasons clear why students fail to progress. The School has recently introduced a mentoring scheme for first year students, in which second year students act as mentors to first year students to help them adjust to university life. The School has found that it is particularly helpful to overseas students and UK students from non-traditional backgrounds. The students have welcomed this initiative. There are also College and University support systems for students with more complex problems. Students are written to if academic problems are identified and departmental administrators are quick to spot and follow up any lapses in attendance. The drop out rate may also be attributable to the fact that aptitude for architecture is difficult to gauge before a student embarks upon it.

The School has tried to alleviate the psychological burden of architecture by changing the number and dates of submissions. They have tried to make it as efficient as possible without compromising standards.

12.5.5 *Assessment*

The Board considered that the School's assessment regime at Part One was appropriate. The School employs a combination of methods including continual informal assessment through crits during the year and culminating in a formal portfolio assessment at the end of the year conducted by a group of internal examiners. There is a clear strategy for feedback.

Since the 2002/2003 academic session, students must pass all 12 course units in order to obtain the BSc (Hons) Architecture Part One. Compensation is not permitted.

Students may transfer to the non-validated BSc (Hons) Architectural Studies programme at the end of Year 1, 2 or 3 if appropriate.

12.5.6 *Admissions and arrangements for direct entry at a stage other than the start of the course*

The School interviews all candidates in which it is interested. This is a time-consuming, but valuable, undertaking as there are many applicants for relatively few places. Overseas students may be asked to send a portfolio or may be interviewed in their home country. The School is interested in demonstration of the ability to excel on an architecture programme, therefore while academic achievement is important, emphasis is also placed on the work presented and discussed at interview. The School also asks students to undertake additional exercises which are designed to help staff assess a student's artistic and creative ability. The standard offer is ABB; students from non-traditional backgrounds are encouraged to apply and each case is taken on its own merits. The School has adopted measures to widen participation, as discussed elsewhere. The Board considered this approach laudable and encourages the School to maintain this if possible. The School now requires applicants to have GCE A Level Art. The Board considered this an interesting development that reflected the return to traditional graphic skills in year 1.

The School accepts students directly into years 2 and 3 very rarely and will only even consider those with exceptional educational and/or professional backgrounds.

The present annual BSc intake is 90 and there are no plans to increase this.

12.6 Detailed Commentary on the Part Two course: Graduate Diploma

12.6.1 *Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives*

The Board had difficulty grasping the overall course objectives because of the unit system, and felt that unit documentation could have been clearer. However the students understood them very well. The Board felt that unit documentation could have been clearer. The Board was content that students are aware of the aims and objectives of each studio as they are given unit presentations which help them to make an informed choice. It was clear that the objectives were being achieved.

12.6.2 *Course design and content*

The Year Four Guide proved to be a very valuable in helping the Board to understand this year in particular and the Diploma as a whole.

The Graduate Diploma is a vertical unit-based programme. There are presently 13 available units, which run in both Years 4 and 5. The process for admittance to a Diploma unit is the same as at Part One. Fourth and fifth years are taught together in each unit. The object of the Diploma is about progression, therefore while students may move units between years four and five, in practice few do.

The Design units are supported by formal study programmes in Technology, History and Theory and Professional Studies. Students are expected to integrate this knowledge into their design work.

The Board was pleased to observe the continuing evolution of the Part Two course; the implementation of the Advanced Architectural Design Project is the most significant change in the Diploma course in the last few years and is clearly playing a major role in the School's holistic approach to Part Two. This was designed as a vehicle to help students demonstrate within the whole year's portfolio (including technical studies) that the Design and Technology and Environment criteria have been met. It was a conscious decision to take every student through the process of designing a complex building in Year Four and has proved to be an effective way of identifying students' strengths and weaknesses. The School has found that it also provides a common currency of discussion which provides the basis for the more specialist work of the fifth year. Students may not progress to the fifth year without successful completion of the project.

The success of this initiative has alleviated initial concerns among staff and students. Staff believed that it encourages students to engage with issues that they might find intimidating or challenging and improves their confidence.

Fifth year follows similar thematic grounds but in greater depth, allowing students great freedom and flexibility and the opportunity to achieve a level of excellence.

The Board believes that this initiative is to be applauded, encouraged and sustained, but needs more support. Its continuing progress should be monitored by additional external examiners to support the present external examiner. The Board recommends that more than one examiner should have responsibility for looking at the fourth year work and the Advanced Architectural Design Project, particularly as the end of fourth year is a progression stage.

In the fifth year students also undertake a Special Research Project, which is a thesis project linked to their design work and comprises an 8000-word piece of writing or equivalent. Students are assigned a tutor and there is a team of 40 specialists of all disciplines on which they can draw. This is supported by one to one tutorials, seminars and workshops.

The Board was pleased to see that technology work is consistently monitored through regular feedback sessions. An internal examiner is assigned to examine this area specifically. Student group working is allowed in the technical submission, but the technical workbook is a component of the overall body of work.

Each unit is free to adopt its own approach and students and staff have options in their methods of working. The Board notes that the School recognises parity between units and confirmed that all Part Two criteria were met, however the Board did see some variation in size and complexity of projects throughout the various units, which should be addressed.

12.6.3 *Quality and coverage of the syllabus (including balance and integration between design/ non-design work)*

- *Design*

The Board was satisfied that all the Part Two Validation Criteria in the area of Design were being met by all of the graduates from the Graduate Diploma.

In the exhibition it was difficult to see everything in its place as it was necessarily selective. This was perhaps due to the lack of sufficient display space to do the work justice. From the evidence seen in the exhibition and portfolios from the units design work is excellent. It is thoughtful and intellectually challenging. Students have high aspirations and the breadth of subjects throughout the units was breathtaking. The Board suggests that, in a small minority of portfolios, students could have achieved a better balance in their design work. This is largely a matter of additional rigour and self-criticism and a more determined pursuit of constructional/spatial resolution.

- *Technology & Environment*

The Board was satisfied that all Part Two Validation Criteria in the area of Technology & Environment were being met by all of the graduates from the Graduate Diploma.

Technology and Environment are addressed explicitly through the Advanced Architectural Design project but it is expected that fifth year students also integrate this into their design work. Based on evidence in the portfolios seen and expanded on by information from the staff, the Board has confidence that the School is addressing these

issues. Issues such as sustainability are embedded in each unit; the School wants to encourage a holistic, creative response to such issues, rather than include them as an explicit highlight or 'bolt on'. Students' work demonstrates competent complexity and there is parity across units. The movement towards explicit exploration is to be encouraged.

- *Cultural Context*

The Board was satisfied that all Validation Criteria in the area of Cultural Context were being met by all of the graduates from the Graduate Diploma.

It was noted that cultural issues, at both urban and urbane levels, are addressed throughout the units. History and theory is taught through eight seminar groups.

- *Communication*

The Board was satisfied that all Part Two Validation Criteria in the area of Communication were being met by all of the graduates from the Graduate Diploma.

The students' work demonstrates the widest use of media. There is an emphasis on craft and using creative modelling. There was also wide use of multi-media presentations. While the Board was satisfied that the criteria were being met, a synopsis of design work accompanying it would have been helpful.

- *Management Practice & Law*

The Board was satisfied that all the Part Two Validation Criteria in the area of Management Practice & Law were

being met by all of the graduates from the Graduate Diploma.

This aspect of the course is very good and is chiefly addressed through a dedicated module in Year Four of the Diploma course. This is delivered through in-house and practice seminars, supported by prominent practitioners and practices who give lectures and lead seminar groups.

12.6.4 *Progression within the course*

The Board believed this was an area which had benefited from the implementation of the Advanced Architectural Design project and the opportunity to expand on areas of interest in Year 5. This gives students the opportunity to excel, allowing them to take advantage of a range of units and concentrate on one area. The project has also been an effective means of identifying weaker students. Students may not progress without passing it, but must either resubmit or take a year out. The relatively high referral rate may be attributed in part to this initiative.

12.6.5 *Assessment*

Assessment at Diploma level is conducted along similar lines as at the BSc, with design work being assessed by crits and portfolio review and supporting studies through coursework or written examination if appropriate. The Advanced Architectural Design Project is assessed separately and must be passed before a student can progress. It is marked pass/fail.

12.6.6 Admissions and arrangements for direct entry at a stage other than the start of the course

At present between 100 and 110 students are admitted to the Diploma course each year. There are no plans to change this.

Students must normally have obtained a 1st or 2.1 degree and selected applicants are interviewed with portfolio. Bartlett Part One graduates have no automatic right of entry and make up only 25% of the Part Two cohort. Approximately 25% of Part Two students are from overseas. Students from non-EU listed schools are required to obtain Part One exemption through the ARB prescribed examination before they complete Part Two in order to be eligible for the award. The majority have done so by the end of the first year of the Diploma.

The School almost never accepts direct entrants into Year 5.

12.7 Detailed Commentary on the Part Three course: Certificate in Professional Practice & Management in Architecture

12.7.1 The Board was satisfied that the work of the two 2006 cohorts which it examined clearly demonstrated that the Part Three Validation Criteria were being met by all graduates from the course and that minimum pass standards were being set appropriately.

12.7.2 The Board considered that this is a good and thorough course. The course was clearly mapped onto the RIBA criteria. The School benefits from an enthusiastic external examiner. This is a new role and the Board looks forward to seeing how it develops.

There are two examination sessions per year, in the summer and autumn. The course is delivered through a compulsory lecture course which includes four themed lecture days, one-to-one tutorials, revision seminars and candidate-led study groups. The examination itself comprises a case study, career evaluation, log book, two examination papers and one office-based paper and the professional interview. All elements are equally weighted. The School has developed an electronic system (called BWP3) for the on-line delivery of the administration and communication elements of Part Three. This includes not only email communications between staff and students but also notice boards and discussion areas.

At the time of the visit 230 students were registered on the course and numbers are growing. An increasing number of EU-qualified architects, who do not need to obtain a UK Part Three for registration purposes, are enrolling on the course as they have found it beneficial for career development.

Priority entry is given to Bartlett students but the School receives applications from all over the UK. In order to be considered, students must have obtained Part Two and must submit a synopsis of a proposed Case Study and a CV. They must then attend a tutorial during which the appropriateness of their experience and qualifications is established, following which they may register if successful. Approximately 200 students are enrolled on the Part Three course each year and approximately 100 take the examination annually. The School finds that increasing numbers of EU qualified candidates wish to

take the examination for personal satisfaction even though they do not need it for registration purposes. Part Three lectures may also be attended as a stand-alone CPD package. CPD is an area which the School may develop, if accommodation pressures are relieved.

The Part Three Examination is a Bartlett award and not a UCL award. The Board was concerned that the Part Three comes within the Faculty QA framework but not within the University's. The Board recommends that the School give serious consideration to making this a UCL award. The School has appointed an External Examiner which is a welcome development. The School needs to continue to develop external examiners in line with UCL QA and QAA guidelines.

12.8 **External examining arrangements**

The Board was able to meet 12 of the School's current External Examiners Parts One, Two and Three. Examiners are assigned to particular areas; some charged with focussing particularly on the design portfolio and others appointed as to examine specialist areas such as history and theory. The Board also met the fourth-year Advanced Architectural Design Project examiner in a separate meeting which enabled them to discuss this in depth.

The External Examiners were overwhelmingly supportive of the School, its ethos and aspirations, the extremely high and inspiring standard of work and the willingness of the School to listen to and address constructive comment.

The University arrangements have now been adopted by the Faculty. External examiners are nominated by programme co-ordinators to the Programme Committee, which then forwards cvs to UCL. Newly appointed examiners are sent an examiners' pack which outlines their responsibilities. An additional external examiner was appointed last year. External Examiners are officially appointed on four-year contracts. Exceptionally they may be invited to do one further year, then they must be in 'quarantine' for 2 years before any further sessions. The present Examiners bring wide experience of examining at other many other schools.

The Examiners reported that they are thoroughly briefed about their remit. This is not to re-mark, but to consider work and confirm whether marks awarded are appropriate in relation to the criteria. They also gain a feel for the culture of the school, make constructive suggestions and offer advice. There are clear procedures for interviews, the consideration of borderline students, and consultation with other external examiners in case of difficulty, to ensure that standards are met, criteria are covered and decisions are fair. External Examiners also act as a sounding board with regard to referrals and mitigating circumstances. The Chief Examiner also attends lectures, tutorials and examinations to assure himself of the process.

All graduating students are interviewed with their academic portfolio.

The External Examiners' main comments were:

- The Unit system is a real strength of the programmes, as it promotes diversity. The scale and complexity of units can vary, but units that do not measure up in scale, complexity or fulfilment of the criteria are discontinued, thus assuring that quality is maintained.
- Interviewing all third and fifth year students is valuable and should be continued.
- Externals are afforded sufficient time in order to make considered judgements, but nevertheless they would welcome more time with the students for discussion, and perhaps more time with unit masters for debate. This would help in particular with discussion of thesis projects, some of which were described as 'extraordinary'.
- At present Examiners see approximately 8-10 students, but Examiners would appreciate being shown a wider range of work to enable them to benchmark it.
- First year work is very good, in fact it is often of such quality that Externals are sometimes concerned that the momentum may not be sustained in later years.
- The best work is inspirational and examining it is a pleasure.
- Some of the subject specialist externals do not see design work and do not meet the students. They confirmed that content and progression are always very clear, but believed there might be gap in what they see as they do not see design work and therefore cannot see how it is integrated.
- The Examiners believed that the introduction of the Advanced Architectural Design Project has been beneficial. It is maturing well. Examiners take a holistic view of the Advanced Architectural Design Project; it is not sufficient simply to tick boxes. The Advanced Architectural Design Project does not permit students to

disregard the criteria in the fifth year, as evidence will be looked for in fifth year work as well. This does not mean that work is duplicated, more that it serves as a preparation for the fifth year allowing students to produce better, more technically mature work in the fifth year. The level of inventiveness and complexity in technology is outstanding. Examiners looking at borderline fifth year work will always revisit the fourth year work to reassure themselves.

- Although it is maturing well and the staff are becoming accustomed to it, the external examiner recommended constant monitoring.
- Group projects are sometimes undertaken but these are not submitted as group submissions. Externals are very careful about the line drawn between individual students' work. Internal assessment systems to establish authorship are rigorous.
- The internal examining process as a whole has improved and is now much more robust.
- Examiners find the process of examination and reporting interesting. The format of responding has changed in recent years. The Externals now complete a short-form response and then discuss compliance with the criteria and wider issues. Feedback is given to the School on the day. Some felt that reports now have a lesser degree of consideration than the former, longer reports, but the immediacy of the feedback to the School is very effective and mitigates this. At the end of the two days all unit leaders attend a meeting with the external examiners, which is minuted.
- Although the main channel for feedback to the school is the examiners' meeting at the end of the board, attended by all staff, and which is fully minuted, examiners do write

up their notes and sometimes send them back to the school. At the beginning of the following year the School provides a verbal summary of the previous year and changes implemented since then.

- Part Three marking sessions are recorded by the Part Three Chief Examiners

The External Examiners voiced concerns about:

- The present facilities, which they believe cannot cope with the numbers of students. The Examiners believed that the programmes of such quality deserved world-class facilities. Improvement in these facilities could only reflect positively on the University. Examiners are concerned that the accommodation might have an impact on students' performance and the accommodation for Part Three examinations was described as 'deplorable'.
- Progression rates at the end of the first year were a source of great concern both to the examiners and to the School. The School has taken steps to address this; that said, its expectations and standards are unapologetically very high.
- At the end of Part Three, professional experience gained in offices is variable. The School has tried to tackle this but it still presents a challenge for examiners. In 2006 more time was allowed for the Professional Examination which helped the Examiners considerably.
- The portfolios are very extravagant; there is a degree of competitiveness among the students. This is not always necessary; however ultimately it is a personal choice.

The Board thought there was a slight anomaly in the fact that fifth year External examiners are not being asked routinely to look at fourth year work.

Although there are clear procedures for length of service and the high calibre of the examiners is not in question, some examiners appeared to have been connected to the school for prolonged periods.

The Board thought that the External Examiners seem uncertain as to aspects of their role, but do perform very well. The Board considered the method of reporting and feedback to the School was excellent. The Board agreed that the Advanced Architectural Design Project was maturing and as it settles down will continue to be a valuable component of the Part Two programme.

12.9 **Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience**

‘Year out’ students enrol at the School for the Year Out Stage 1 Certificate which covers the period between graduating from Part One and starting Part Two. Students have regular tutorials with the Professional Studies Advisor (Year Out) and are assigned an Employment Mentor. PEDR records can be signed off either in a one to one tutorial or by post. There is a series of lectures and seminars held at various points in the year. Students must also submit an essay in August at the end of the Year Out.

Part Two students also receive PEDR monitoring, tutoring and support on a quarterly basis, which is also offered by distance learning. Support can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual student. The School has recently introduced a Stage 2 monitoring programme for students working in offices who are not yet ready to take the Part Three course.

12.10 **Students**

The Visiting Board enjoyed a varied and candid discussion with a large number of students. All years of each validated programme were represented and some year out students also attended.

The Board found the students to be highly articulate, intense, resourceful and intellectually ambitious. They clearly take ‘ownership’ of process.

The students considered the strengths of the School to be:

- The intellectual ambition and intensity of the work on display when they came for interview, which attracted them to the School.
- Its very energetic culture.
- The School has lived up to their expectations; students are impressed with how they are pushed to fulfil their potential.
- The commitment of the staff is impressive.
- It was generally acknowledged that feedback has improved, crits and portfolio reviews being now much more consistent, positive and constructive. The level of feedback is adjusted appropriately as students move up the School, becoming more of a conversation at Diploma level. There is a proper balance between being guided and afforded greater independence. The criteria are clearly laid out in the course booklets. The School had clearly responded to concerns raised by students.
- Students appreciate the accessibility of staff, who are always available to give advice whether in

person or via email. They respond very quickly, especially at high pressure times.

- Feedback from the students is actively sought by the School by means of questionnaires and the Staff-Student Committee which meets twice a year and the minutes of which are forwarded to UCL. In past years the Committee has sometimes been chaired by a student, although this depends on the enthusiasm of the students.
- The breadth of units, particularly at Diploma level, gives all students the opportunity to pursue their particular interests.
- The students appreciated the fact that UCL is a multi-faculty university, giving access to experts in every field for consultation.
- The students enjoy the benefits of the strong research culture, both directly (being able to use some of the research facilities) and indirectly. While they thought that much of the research is probably at too advanced a level for undergraduate studies they appreciated the opportunity to attend evening lectures giving them access to contemporary, cutting-edge, exciting information. The researchers' level of commitment was infectious.
- For the most part students were had found the Advanced Architectural Design project a positive and holistic experience, although some reservations had been expressed about the risk of its becoming a tick-box exercise. There was still sufficient scope for an individual approach. It was an excellent preparation for the fifth year and was useful when seeking employment.

Amongst the concerns raised by students were:

- The lack of studio and crit space. The policy of prioritising the first years was considered excellent if not crucial by students, as it introduces them to the discourse of architecture and other people's ideas, but the situation for the students in other years was much more difficult. Students believed that the loss of crit space is affecting the way the School is working and the work itself. It reduces opportunities to be inspired by others' work, affects communications and makes model-making difficult. Working from home can be isolating for some students.
- Plotting and printing facilities. Maintenance of these and access can be a problem; students often go to private companies.
- The process of applying to units which can be stressful. Earlier concerns about parity of units, particularly with regard to assessment, appear to have been alleviated.
- Students would like to see more involvement from practices.
- Expenditure on materials, which was also a concern to the Board. Students did not want to lessen their output or lose the tactile quality of their work and to rein in their output. They said that they would like to spend less but there was an expectation that they should spend lots of money. It is not clear whose expectation this is.

The present full-time equivalent SSR for both Part One and Part Two is 1:16.9. This compares very favourably with other UK schools.

12.11 **Staff**

The Board were pleased to meet a representative group of the many full-time, part-time and fractional staff who are involved in the architecture programme. There are presently nine Professorships and Readerships, 16 full time and part time lecturers and over a hundred part time teachers, consultants and technical staff. These are supported by 12 administrative staff (full and part time)

The staff were forthcoming, forthright, honest and candid in their conversation. Their enthusiasm and commitment were apparent and there is evident synergy between staff and students.

The meeting was particularly useful in helping the Board to explore and understand the assessment regime, the evolution and success of the Advanced Architectural Design Project and the role of External Examiners.

The employment of part-time and fractional staff has distinct benefits for the School. Continuity of fractional staff is very good, and the staff's involvement in practice in London and the participation of practitioners ensures that teaching always at the cutting edge. The School is also able to bring in specialists where necessary.

The School pays great attention to the development of specialist teaching skills, which receives priority funding. .

Part-time staff must undergo induction and training to ensure quality and standards. A workshop is also held for them. Unit tutors must also take the introductory induction and are also offered the opportunity to do full staff training. Programme directors act as mentors. Peer review is very important; unit crits and interim portfolio reviews are undertaken in groups so that staff can see how other units are assessed. Full time and part time staff attend each other's crits which promotes a constant exchange about design issues and progress of design units. Staff members with no previous teaching experience are rarely given a unit; new staff are usually paired with more experienced members.

There is also a clear process for choosing, training and vetting consultants who are brought in to help students with specialist areas.

The Board also discussed the benefits and challenges of teaching in a research intensive institution. All staff attend monthly architecture research meetings whether or not they are engaged in research. There is an architecture research fund to which any staff member may apply whether formally engaged in research or not.

The Board learned that while balancing teaching and research is challenging, the real problem lies in the increasing administrative burden placed on staff.

12.12 **Research:**

UCL is a research-intensive institution. Research, and its development in new directions, is heavily encouraged and supported at institutional level.

The Bartlett as a whole achieved a 4-grading in the last Research Assessment Exercise in 2000. This was disappointing and could have seriously affected the School's funding. However, the University stepped in to support the School. Expectations going into the next RAE in 2008 are very high. In anticipation of this the School's research operations have been reviewed and reorganised, with the appointment of a Director of Architectural Research and a Research Administrator, research seminars and an Architecture Research Fund, open to all staff.

The Bartlett School of Planning and the Bartlett School of Architecture each have a research director and a research group that meets once a month. The Bartlett School of Graduate Studies undertakes large funded projects and more science-based projects.

The School's main areas of research are Architecture, (incorporating Design, History and Theory and Technology), Planning, Space, Environment and Management. Prospective submissions to RAE 2008 will be scrutinised carefully by the School senior management. Mentoring and research appraisal has also been introduced in preparation. It is intended that Architecture and Building Science will submit to RAE 2008 together. The Schools are investigating bringing the different expertise of arts and humanities and of science together, exploring different ways of generating projects across architecture and building science. Relevant research activities also extend across the university, with inter-school dialogue. Cross-faculty working is facilitated by UCL.

Links between research and teaching have always existed as each unit has a research-driven agenda. Research at the Bartlett exists to make the link between teaching and practice. The School wishes to develop ways of measuring quantity and quality. The School anticipates that practice-led research will be increasingly important. The Architecture Research Fund will enhance this as it facilitates the crossover into making applications for external research funding. It is also starting point for establishing links between teaching units and the themes behind research and the units. This will present exciting possibilities for the staff.

The Board found that the School has well-developed and articulated strategies for research and enabling staff to engage in it. The Board was particularly impressed with the School's website which demonstrated how embedded the research was into the courses. The staff believe they are fortunate to be in a research-focussed university with the opportunities this presents and the benefits it brings.

12.13 **Equal Opportunities**

The gender balance very good. Staff, students, all levels of management. At the time of the visit diversity statistics appeared incomplete. The Board believed that this should be monitored more closely but was confident that this would happen with the School's increasing engagement with University QA procedures. The School is currently researching the gender and ethnic make up of its current students and applicants, the results of which should be available later in 2007.

The Board welcomed the School's awareness of widening participation challenges and the initiatives established to tackle these. A summer school was established a year ago and the School is also building links with schools in its home borough of Camden. The summer school is designed to give school students the opportunity to experience life at the School but it is not tied to the admissions system. It receives a Widening Participation subsidy from the University; participants also contribute.

In recent years the School has made enormous efforts to bursaries. The School has confirmed £9k per year for two students and others are in the pipeline.

12.14 **Resourcing and Facilities:**

- General

Architecture is housed in a purpose-built facility, Wates House. Pressure on space is severe and the University has agreed not only to refurbish Wates House but also to provide a new building which will bring all departments of the Faculty of the Built Environment onto a coherent site. Pending planning approvals it is anticipated that all work will be completed by 2012.

Research allocation is resource-led, which means that the outcome of RAE 2008 will be critical. The Board was pleased with the University's commitment to increase and improve the Faculty's facilities, but recommends short term capital investment to increase the crit space for architecture, which is considered vital by the students.

- Studios

The School has developed a strategy to deal with the lack of accommodating pending agreement on a new building. The School has limited studio space but discriminates positively for first years. Each unit has a small 'base room' but these are not large enough for students to work in for prolonged periods. Crit and pin up space is gradually being eroded which is a cause of great concern to students who appreciate the opportunity to view other students' work.

- IT

The School houses dedicated computer teaching space and computer 'clusters'. The School provides an Apple Mac computing suite which is equipped by a lease-provision arrangement allowing the School to provide up-to-date hardware and software.

The students appeared content with computing provision but did cite lack of sufficient plotters as a concern.

- Workshops and Laboratories

The workshop is a particular strength of the School and valued very highly by the students. There are facilities for wood work, metal work and plastics and these are manned by specialists. The Board would describe the facilities as scruffy but functional. The anechoic chamber is very dated. The School also has an artificial sky which was installed for research purposes many years ago. It is now rather old but evidently still useful and used a lot by the students.

The School also provides photographic studios with dark rooms and wet processing facilities.

- Library

The Faculty benefits from an excellent in-house library, the UCL Bartlett (Environmental Studies) Library. This houses the architecture, building, construction management and planning collections. It is manned by very well-informed and enthusiastic staff, including a dedicated Architecture and Planning Subject Librarian.

The Wates House Library is open from 9.30am to 8.30pm Mondays to Thursdays, until 7pm on Fridays and from 9.30 to 4.30 on Saturdays. Other University libraries are open seven days a week. Students also enjoy open access to all London University libraries (providing access to 2 million books and 12000 journals in print or electronic format) and are encouraged to use the RIBA library as it is close by.

The Faculty of the Built Environment Collection Management Policy is to support both teaching and research activities of the Faculty. It presently houses approximately 40000 volumes on open shelves and 260 current periodical journals. These are supplemented by a collection of older journals. The acquisitions policy is flexible as staff and students are encouraged to make suggestions. Most requests are met. Certain texts are kept for specific purposes, such as short-term loans. The Bartlett's book budget of £33k is supplemented by a multiple copies fund and also a contingency fund. The first copy of a book is bought from the main budget and subsequent copies from the multiple copies fund. Multiple copies of articles and specific chapters of books are kept in the teaching collection. The Library is expanding its collection of architectural videos and DVDs.

Reading lists are available online and contain links to online materials and catalogues. The University's policy is to hold or access material electronically wherever possible, which can be accessed both on and off-site.

The Library also provides reader spaces, photocopying facilities and PCs providing access to the UCL catalogue and online materials. This is provided via the eUCLid system which may be accessed from anywhere, subject to licensing considerations. Interlibrary loans may be obtained for a small charge.

Induction sessions for new students are held at the beginning of each academic year. More specialist instruction is available for students as the need arises.

13. Documentation Supplied

- 13.1.1 Prior to the visit, the Board was provided by the School with the
Critical Self-Appraisal
Questionnaire
Supplementary Information
External Examiners' reports and responses 2004-2006
- 13.2 Board members had access to the following additional information in their base room or the room containing the portfolios:

Course booklets and prospectus
Bartlett Course Guide
Bartlett Undergraduate and Diploma Guide

Part Three Handbook and Prospectus

UCL Prospectus

Student Guide BSc

Students Guide Diploma

Student Guide Part Three

Tutor Guide BSc

Tutor Guide Diploma

Academic Timetable

Staff cvs

External Examiner CVs

BSc course documentation

Diploma Course Documentation

Dissertation Topics

Year Out documentation

Part Three Course Documentation

Student attendance registers

QAA Audit and Response

Student Questionnaires

Mark Sheets

General information

Bartlett publications

Board members were also provided with a networked PC allowing access to a wide range of additional School documentation