

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board
to De Montfort University**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 4 June 2008

**Leicester School of Architecture
Department of Product & Spatial Design**

**Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural
Practice, Part Three**

Date of Visiting Board: 31 May-1 June 2007, resumed 27
November 2007

**NB This report should be read in conjunction with the Part
Three Visiting Board Report of 22 June 2006.**

1. Information About the Courses

1.1 Courses offered for revalidation:

Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Part Three

1.2 Address of the Institution where the courses are delivered

Leicester School of Architecture
Department of Product & Spatial Design
Faculty of Art and Design
De Montfort University
Fletcher Building
The Gateway
Leicester LE1 9BH

T: 0116 257 7571
F: 0116 257 7518
W: www.dmu.ac.uk.

1.3 Name of Awarding Body

De Montfort University

1.4 Name of Head of School

Professor Hassan Abdalla

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 31 May-1 June 2007 were:

Kathy Gal, (Chair)
John Stevenson (Vice Chair)

Elantha Evans

Paul Harrison

Professor Bob Giddings

Pavandeep Panesar – Student/graduate member

Sheila Ryding – Co-professional member

Simon Gratton – RIBA Regional Representative

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

Mr Nicholas Smith (Head of Validation, RIBA) attended the Board as an observer.

Ms Louise Marshall-Nichols (DMU) acted as Institutional Facilitator.

2.2 Members of the RIBA Part Three Revisiting Board on 27 November 2007 were:

Kathy Gal (Chair)

John Stevenson (Vice Chair)

Frank Woods

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

3. Procedures & Criteria for the Visit

3.1 Visiting Board carried out under the 'RIBA Procedures for the Validation of UK Courses and Examinations in Architecture,' published July 2003, effective from September 2003, 'Tomorrow's Architect,' published March 2003, effective from September 2003, and 'Description & Regulations for the recognition of courses, programmes and examinations in Professional Practice

and Management, (Part 3) in the UK. For more information see www.architecture.com.

4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board to the Education Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects Education Committee

4.1 At its meeting on 4 June 2008 the Education Committee Visiting Board recommends to the Education Committee of the RIBA **Continued Validation** of;

Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice, Part Three

4.2 The next Visiting Board to De Montfort University should take place in will take place in 2010/2011.

5. Criteria for Validation

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

6. Standards

6.1 On the basis of the sample of academic portfolios examined, the work from previous year of the courses listed in 4.1 was inspected during the visit and was found to meet the required standards.

7. Conditions of Validation

7.1 There were no conditions attached to the courses listed in 4.1.

8. 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 courses and examinations 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 courses/qualifications listed in 4.

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

The 2007 Board was satisfied that the conditions placed on the Part Three course by the Visiting Board of 2006 had been met. The Board also wished to echo the 2007 Board's comments on the quality of the School's programmes and the commitment of the staff.

9.3 Recommendations

9.3.1 The Visiting Board has made the following recommendations. 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 recommendations may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

- 9.3.2 The Board drew to the School's attention several persistent errors in the documentation which need correction, particularly with regard to professional experience.
- 9.3.3 The Board recommends that the School clarify the role of the professional interview. Under the present system, a candidate who fails a particular component of the examination must also resit the professional interview. This should be clarified in the documentation.
- 9.3.4 Although the Board was confident following discussion with the course leader and the External Examiner that the present graduating cohort had met the minimum 24 months', it wishes to comment on the inadequacy of the attendant documentation. The Board recommends that the School continue to be vigilant that evidence of 24 months' professional experience is provided. The School needs to strengthen the procedures whereby the achievement of minimum time periods is made explicit.
- 9.3.5 The Board found that the base evidence of professional experience can be found in the PEDR records. However, it is not yet an explicit part of the Examination process that the External Examiner verify in person that this has taken place, at present being reassured by the Course Leader that processes are taking place. At present the External Examiner is not required to check that

experience gained is appropriate. The Board recommends that this be made an explicit part of the External Examiner's remit.

10. Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports

- 10.1 The last RIBA Visiting Board to the Part Three at De Montfort University took place on 22 June 2006.

The Visiting Board had every confidence in the content and delivery of the Part Three course at the Leicester School of Architecture. The course benefits from dedicated, competent staff, a long-standing, successful and mutually beneficial arrangement with the Universities of Sheffield and Nottingham and the support of University senior management.

The 2006 Board recommended that the Part Three receive continued validation with conditions. The following conditions of recognition applied:

- i. That a Revisiting Board visit the School in 2007 to view the latest assessments:
 - a. If a Part One/Part Two full Visiting Board is invited to visit the School in 2007, the Part Three revisit could be timed to co-incide.
 - b. If there is no Part One/Part Two full visit in 2007, a separate Part Three visit will take place. In either event some continuity with the present Board will be provided.

The Board's concerns centred on aspects of the quality assurance of the course, specifically the ability of the

Professional Examiners (known at De Montfort as External Assessors) and the External Examiner, who (in the opinion of the Board) between them did not have sufficient recent experience of examining at other schools and therefore had no benchmarks upon which to judge comparability.

- ii. An interim report describing what measures the School will take to address the conditions should be submitted to the RIBA Validation Committee for its meeting on 21 March 2007.

The report was duly sent and considered by the Validation Committee on 21 March 2007.

11. Details of the Conditions in Item 8.

- 11.1 There were no conditions attached to the courses listed in 4.1 by the Revisiting Board.

12. Commentary

12.1 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit

The Board thanks the School for their kindness and hospitality during the visit. The Visiting Board of 27 November 2007 was a resumption of the visit commenced on 31 May 2007, at which the School's Part One and Part Two programmes were recommended for continued validation. Consideration of the Part Three was adjourned in order to allow the School to obtain additional information in support of the Part Three programme. The resumed Revisiting Board of 27 November 2007 comprised the Chair and Vice-Chair of the May/June 2006 and an additional practitioner member with

experience of Part Three programmes. The School provided, in a timely manner, amended versions of the course documentation provided in summer 2006. All practical arrangements were appropriate.

12.2. *Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit*

The School provided the work of all candidates who had submitted for examination in 2005-2006. This was identical to the sample provided for the Visiting Board in May-June 2006. This was supplemented by the revised course guidebook and all assignment documents for the relevant period.

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

The remit of the present visit was to consider whether the conditions placed on the programme by the 2006 Visiting Board had satisfactorily been met. The School's response to the Board's recommendations will be discussed at a future mid-term monitoring visit and formally considered at the next full Visiting Board to De Montfort, to take place in 2010 or 2011.

In its response to the Visiting Board report of June 2006, the School informed the RIBA of the following developments:

- A new External Examiner to the Part Three examination has been appointed. This individual has extensive experience of examining at Part Three level.
- A new Professional Examiner had been appointed to replace one whose term of service had come to an end.

- The University Department of Academic Quality had built the RIBA advice and requirement regarding the appointment of External and Professional Examiners into its QAA systems. The November 2007 Board confirmed that all internal and external examiners are registered architects.
- All External Examiners are offered the opportunity to attend an induction/training day. All Professional Examiners were encouraged to attend RIBA training days and underwent induction during visits to the School.
- With regard to the issue of double-marking, the School outlined in its response its system for double-marking and moderation.

The 2007 Revisiting Board agreed that the condition on the course had been met. The Board wished to add its own recommendations to those of the 2006 Visiting Board; these are outlined above at Item 10.

12.4 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Three Qualification**

The structure and content of the course are described in more detail in the Visiting Board report of 22 June 2006. As stated earlier, the Visiting Board had every confidence in the content and delivery of the Part Three course.

The 2007 Revisiting Board's discussions centred chiefly on management of systems. In order to be assured that systems were effective it was necessary to consider candidates' work. As with the Visiting Board of 2006, the Revisiting Board was confident about standards and the level of passes. Even at lowest pass level the work was well-written and appropriately marked. The Part Three

criteria have now been incorporated into the mapping document and the programme guide as well as in the work assignments.

The School confirmed that all students were required to pass each component of the course and that compensation was not permitted.

However, the Board recommends that the School clarify the role of the professional interview. Under the present system, a candidate who fails a particular component of the examination must also resit the professional interview. This should be clarified in the documentation.

While the Board was confident following discussion with the Course Leader and the External Examiner that the present graduating cohort had met the minimum requirement of 24 months' professional experience, it wishes to comment on the inadequacy of the attendant documentation. The Board recommends that the School continue to be vigilant that evidence of 24 months' professional experience is clearly provided. The School needs to strengthen the procedures whereby the achievement of minimum time periods is made explicit.

The Board was of the opinion that the School should clarify in the course documentation the specific staff responsibilities for determining and recording the process for establishing how candidates meet the criteria. The Board believed that the good grounding in Management, Practice and Law provided by the School's Part One programme and in particular by the Part Two (which had been considered in June 2007) stood candidates in good stead when taking Part Three at the School. The Board commends the School for the continuity of coverage of

management, practice and law through all the validated programmes.

The Board confirms that all Part Three internal and External Examiners are registered architects.

12.5 External examining arrangements

The School has appointed a new External Examiner who has extensive experience of examining at Part Three. The Board had the opportunity to meet her at both visits (summer and November 2007). The meeting at the November visit allowed the Board to be reassured about aspects of the quality systems supporting the Part Three examination which had not been immediately apparent at the time of the summer visit. The External Examiner confirmed that advice and feedback regarding standards and suggested improvements to processes is heeded and acted upon. She confirmed that there is now a clear audit trail for all stages of assessment, including moderation. However, there are aspects of the External Examining arrangements which the Board believes could be strengthened further.

The Board found that the base evidence of professional experience can be found in the PEDR records. However, it is not yet an explicit part of the Examination process that the External Examiner verify in person that this has taken place, at present being reassured by the Course Leader that processes are taking place. At present the External Examiner is not required to check that experience gained is appropriate. The Board recommends that this be made an explicit part of the External Examiner's remit.

12.6 Staff

The Board commends the enthusiasm of the Professional Studies Adviser. The Board welcomes the fact that the School is augmenting resources to support the Part Three programme. This was raised as a concern by the External Examiner.

13. Attachments

The School provided the following documentation:

Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice RIBA Part Three programme guide, November 2006 (Revised May 2007).

Mapping documentation

An Introduction to Academic Quality for New Staff September 2007