

RIBA [□]

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board
to Kingston University**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 6 July 2009

**School of Architecture and Landscape
Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture**

**BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One,
Graduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two
Postgraduate Diploma Professional Practice Architecture,
Part Three**

Date of Visiting Board: 06/07 November 2008

1. Information About the Courses

1.1 Courses offered for revalidation:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One, 3 years full time.
Graduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two, 2 years full time, 3 years part time.
Postgraduate Diploma Professional Practice Architecture, Part Three, 11 months part-time.

1.2 Address of the Institution where the courses are delivered

Faculty of Art, Design
& Architecture
Kingston University
Knights Park
Kingston KT1 2QJ

T:

F:

W: www.kingston.ac.uk

1.3 Name of Awarding Body

Kingston University

1.4 Name of Head of School

Daniel Rosbottom.

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 06/07 November 2008 were:

Patrick Monaghan (Chair)
Professor Ruth Morrow (Vice Chair)
Steve Race

Peter Williams*

Melanie Richardson

James Brown (student/graduate member)

Simon Smith (Co-professional member)

Henning Stummel (RIBA regional representative)

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

David Gloster (RIBA Director of Education) attended the Board as an observer.

*Peter Williams declared an interest as a graduate of the Kingston Part Three programme in 2005. By mutual consent between the Head of School and the Board Mr Williams did not participate in any discussions or decisions concerning the Part Three programme.

Annie Sandler, Faculty QA manager, acted as institutional facilitator.

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 September 2003, effective from September 2003, 'RIBA Criteria for Validation', published March 2002, effective from September 2003, and 'Description & Regulations for the recognition of courses, programmes and examinations in Professional Practice and Management, (Part 3)'. For more information see www.architecture.com.

4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board

4.1 At its meeting on 6 July 2009 the Education Committee of the RIBA confirmed Continued Validation of

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One, 3 years full time.
Graduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two, 2 years full time, 3 years part time.
Postgraduate Diploma Professional Practice Architecture, Part Three, 11 months part-time.

4.2 The next Visiting Board should take place in 2012.

5. Recommendation of the Visiting Board to the Commonwealth Association of Architects and the Construction Industry Council & 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 courses met the Construction Industry Council Common Learning Outcomes for Degree Courses in the Built Environment

5.3 The Visiting Board recommends to ARB that the Part 1 & 2 courses met all points of the EU Directive.

6. Criteria for Validation

6.1 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).

7. Standards

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

8. Conditions of Validation

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

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 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.

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

10.1.1 The Board thanks the staff and students for a thoroughly enjoyable and positive visit. The Board commends the staff body for their continued commitment and enthusiasm through challenging times. The Board appreciates the openness of staff and students throughout the visit and, in particular, during well-attended and engaging meetings.

Senior university management acknowledged the staff's achievement in maintaining the ethos of the School and managing large numbers of students through a period of instability. They expressed confidence in the staff's ability to deal with present and future challenges.

The Board hopes that the report will be received in the spirit in which it is offered, which is to highlight the School's strengths, whilst offering recommendations and advice intended to support the School, enhance the validated programmes and assist with improving standards.

10.2 Among the School's strengths are:

- The committed and enthusiastic staff body who have remained a cohesive unit during a challenging period.
- The enthusiastic, articulate student body
- The diversity of staff and student bodies.
- The School's existing and growing links with practice.
- The possibility of exploring research through teaching and practice.

- Its location in a School of Art and Design, providing exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and research. The wider university also provides scope for such activity if linkages can be established.
- The exciting opportunities for research and entrepreneurship provided by ARCHILAB and the introduction of cross year projects, which engage with real world issues and scenarios – as exemplified by the Croydon Project.
- The Part Three programme which was described as having a strong personality. It is innovative and creative. The Board commends this and believes that if it is used as a model for the Part One and Part Two programmes, management practice and law could become an outstanding component of the Kingston school.

10.3 Recommendations

10.3.1 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, or provide the RIBA with a clear rationale for not doing so, may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

10.3.2 The Board noted that the School intends to consider and address any necessary adjustments or changes to the Part Two Programme in 2009. The Board recommends that the head and staff articulate their statement of intent for the Diploma in relation to the ongoing issues raised at the 2004 Visiting Board and the mid-term visit in January

2007. The Board hopes that this will address the issues raised by the 2004 Visiting Board.

In the light of the intended review of the Part 2 the Board recommends that the School continues to address the areas identified in the 2004 Report as well as those included within this report and that an appropriate timescale can be agreed for their full implementation prior to the next mid-term visit in 2010. The Board recommends that if at all possible a statement of intent be forwarded to the New Courses and Course Changes Group in September 2009. This request is explained in more detail in paragraph 13.6.1, page 11.

10.3.3 The Board recommends that the School look at rebalancing construction, structure, environmental design and sustainability modules at Part One.

10.3.4 The Board recommends that the School use its unique multi-disciplinary situation to improve the diversity of students' skills. The School should explore all available opportunities provided by the workshops and other facilities.

10.4 Advice

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

10.4.2 The Board advises the School to review Year 1 modules which consider material thinking and Year 2 modules which consider constructed environments with a view to encouraging a balance of drawing and the demonstration or experimentation with other forms of presentation.

10.4.3 The Board advises the School, when considering recruitment of new examiners, to provide as broad a background and educational perspective as possible.

10.4.4 The Visiting Board was pleased to note the intention to bring in additional resources at Part Three and advises that this be implemented.

10.4.5 The Board advises that students need to record their models or use of models to develop and represent a scheme. The Board advises that the School consider other formats and media and needs to consider different methods of representation.

11. Summary of previous Visiting Board reports

The last RIBA Visiting Board to the Kingston University took place on 11/12 November 2004. The Board recommended that Continued validation be granted to:

Part One: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Architecture (three years full-time)

Part Two: Graduate Diploma in Architecture (two years full-time, or three years part-time)

Part Three: Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Practice of Architecture (eleven months part-time)

The summary of the 2004 Visiting Board report and its recommendations and advice can be found in section 15 of this report.

12. Details of the Conditions in Item 8.

11.1 There were no conditions attached to the courses listed in

4.1.

13. Commentary

13.1 Self-Appraisal and Developments since the last visit

The documents were honest and frank about the challenges facing the School and set out a clear statement about its future ambition and development. Significant changes have taken or are about to take place with regard to staffing and facilities. The School now seems to be rekindling its ethos. A new Head of School was appointed in August 2008 after a period of uncertainty. University management and the Board praised the staff's management of the programmes during this period.

The Board was impressed by the new Head of School and his vision for architecture. The Board noted his strategic direction is to build links with practice and to develop vertical conversations within the School. The new head wishes the School to develop a conversation with itself and believes its present size will enable this to be accomplished successfully. The School has introduced strategic projects, which will operate at a number of scales and in possible association with agencies outside the academic context.

The University wishes also to encourage interdisciplinary working but acknowledges that there are practical challenges. The will is there at all levels to try to make this more of a reality. The improved accessibility of facilities is a major step in facilitating cross-collaboration. The improvement of workshop facilities, both in terms of the facilities themselves and access to them, has the potential to have significant impact on the working of the School. The benefits of this are still being assessed but the Board learned in discussion with staff and students that initial

reactions are positive. Discussions are taking place about future estates development and the School's needs.

The new flatter management structure should facilitate the flow of work and development of research. The School has the support of a large institution in its ambition to establish and develop a track record in research, consultancy and entrepreneurship.

13.2 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit

The Board thanks the staff and school for their exceptional hospitality during the visit. Staff and school were welcoming and helpful and all arrangements were excellent.

The documentation was thorough. Staff were happy to provide additional information and clarification as needed.

13.2.1 Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit. The following sample was provided from the 2007/2008 graduating cohorts:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One:

Year One

3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high passes from a cohort of 67 who passed.

Year Two 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high passes from a cohort of 96.

Year Three 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high passes from a cohort of 66.

Graduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two

Year One 3 lowest passes, 2 middle, 2 high passes from a cohort of 20 full time and 5 part time students .

Year Two 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high, passes from a cohort of 11.

Part Three: 3 lowest passes, 2 middle passes, 2 high passes from a cohort of 54 successful candidates.

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

The Board understood that steps had been taken to address the recommendations of the 2004 visiting Board, but remained concerned that some of these problems appeared to be embedded. The Board hopes that these will be addressed under the new leadership.

The Board considered that the recommendations relating to Part Two had not been acted upon with sufficient vigour. These issues are explored in greater detail in the relevant sections of this report.

The External Examiners reported that the School is open to comment and advice and had addressed all pertinent issues. It was acknowledged, however that further work could be done with regard to teaching and addressing the sustainability agenda.

13.4 **Context of the courses within the wider provision of the school and Faculty.**

The School of Architecture and Landscape forms part of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture alongside the Schools of Art & Design History, Communication Design, 3D Design, Foundation Studies, Fine Art and Surveying and Planning. These offer a wide variety of foundation courses, short courses, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across the spectrum of disciplines. This

provides a rich source of expertise and facilities with tremendous potential for collaborative and interdisciplinary working. The Board noted that informal collaboration already takes place and students in particular were beginning to establish connections with students studying different disciplines, to seek advice from specialists in relevant fields and take advantage of the facilities on offer. This has become easier in recent times. Staff are eager to establish links on a more formal footing, both within the Faculty and with other faculties across the university.

In particular the Board noted the excellent transformation of the workshop and looks forward to this manifesting itself in students' work.

The University also offers engineering programmes within the Faculty of Engineering, including Civil Engineering.

The Board considered that the School is still somewhat bound within the Faculty. The Board welcomes the intention of staff and encourages the School to explore interfaculty links. The architecture of the building is conducive to informal meetings.

13.5 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the Part One**

13.5.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives
The programme objectives were clear and valid and demonstrably being achieved.

The Board considered that the first year could be less analytical and more exploratory. The Board considered that there was a lack of experimentation in terms of

representation. The Board considered that Year Two contained some interesting and entertaining work but at first year there was a lack of texture and alternatives.

The Board recommends that the School use its unique multi-disciplinary situation to improve the diversity of students' skills. The School should explore all available opportunities provided by the workshops and other facilities. These will develop in the second and third year.

13.5.2 Course design and content

The Part One programme followed by cohorts whose work was reviewed by the Board (2007/2008) was a year-based programme within a modular framework, consisting of three core design modules complemented by support modules. Support modules are intended to have some clear relevance to the design modules. At the time of the visit, both Part One and Part Two were operating within studio/unit based systems. There is no longer a joint first year with Landscape although some modules are shared across the courses

Year one includes a study skills module which is intended to assist students with the transition from an examination-led school environment into a design-led university environment.

The second year is intended to build on the first year and also introduces options and specialisms such as photography, model making, Rhino 3D and so forth. These are intended to be connected to and integrated with studio work.

The School has tried to introduce greater variety into the third year at the suggestion of the external examiners. The

third year is set around a project and a place. Students write a dissertation on a topic of their choice. They may be advised to consider issues that have arisen in their project work or their own cultural background.

The most significant change to course content (at both Parts One and Two) involves the entire School working within a complex single context. Units will explore different aspects, complemented by vertical projects. The whole is intended to engender engagement, discussion and debate throughout the School involving staff and students across all years. At the end it is intended that the School will present a collective thesis and curate a single document. The School believes that such an initiative is more strategic than traditional live projects as it allows an engagement that should not be affected by other external factors such as economic downturn.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Design.

The design ethos of the school is thinking through making. The Board considered that designs could be enhanced and strengthened if influenced by sister criteria to a greater extent; in particular by greater integration of technology and communication skills.

The Board was very interested in the use of an 'evolutionary/ iterative' 1:20 section in third year and

amongst the more able students the strength of this as a learning experience was very clear however amongst the remaining students it was less coherently expressed in the portfolios. The Board viewed this as an excellent idea was disappointed that it did not appear to have been pursued with vigour in students' work. The Board encourages the school to find ways to encourage students to present it as an integrated part of their portfolio and demonstration of their technical learning.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Technology and Environment.

The integration of science and technology is taken very seriously by the School and forms part of the remit of the Reader in Architectural Science and Technology (and director of ArchiLab). Although progress has been made the Board considered that greater integration of technology could be achieved and noted the head of School's intention that integration will take place after the first year. At present the weighting of sustainability and the manner of delivery are problematic. The Board considered that the weighting allocated to the module was disproportionately generous given the output and quality of the work.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Cultural Context.

There were some well-written and produced dissertations across a range of subjects at the high end of achievement. The Board hopes that the broad spectrum of research and theory at this level continues to thrive and may also influence investigation at design level.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Communication.

The Board considered that there could be greater exploration in the first year. Students should realise that they are not restricted to the A1 format and should include more evidence of process and design development for example, sketchbooks.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Management, Practice and Law.

The Board believes that Management, Practice and Law has the potential to become a notable strength of the school in all validated programmes.

In the BA programme as written, this area exceeds the requirements of the Part One criteria. Students undertake a learning skills module which encourages self-reflection and provides good preparation for practice. The Board considered that evidence in the portfolios was not very strong, but learned that students felt well-prepared.

The Part Three programme leader has, until recently, acted as the professional studies adviser. A new appointment has recently been made with specific responsibility for Parts One and Two. Given the innovation of Part Three, the Board would welcome its greater influence of the professional study aspects of the Part One and Part Two programme.

- *Preparation for Professional Experience, (Part 1 only)*
This is well executed and is described in more detail above.

13.5.4 Progression within the course

The School itself noted that progression needed further scrutiny and action as rates were relatively low. The School has identified that overseas students are more likely to leave and is considering ways to improve progression and retention. The Board encourages and supports the school in its endeavours.

13.5.5 Assessment:

The Board considered that assessment methods were appropriately, fair and rigorous. Compensation is not permitted.

The Board noted that there were 2.5 stand alone modules covering sustainability in a programme comprising 24 modules in total. The Board considered that this was too many and recommended that the School look at rebalancing construction, structure, environmental design and sustainability modules at Part One.

The Board advises the School to review Year 1 modules which consider material thinking and Year 2 modules which consider constructed environments with a view to

encouraging a balance of drawing and the demonstration or experimentation with other forms of presentation.

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

Approximately 100 students are admitted to the BA programme each year. Applications are steadily rising; 103 entered in 2007/8 and 119 in 2008/9. The School commented that this is putting pressure on resources.

The standard offer is 320 UCAS points, preferably including an art or design-based subject. The quality of applicant is rising, as a result of which the School has not entered the clearing system in the last two years. The Board commented that the shortlisting and interviewing process was good. The School holds Architecture Open Days throughout the year to enable shortlisted students to gain realistic expectations about the nature of architecture programmes. Shortlisted students are required to submit a portfolio and may be interviewed. Those unable to attend submit a digital portfolio. This also allows the School flexibility as appropriate when making offers, in the interests of widening participation.

Appropriate APEL systems are in place for admission at later stages of the programme or for mature entrants.

13.6 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the Part Two

13.6.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives
Although the Board was confident that all Part Two criteria were being met, it considered that the course objectives might be defined more clearly. The School's intention is that thinking through making be embedded in

the programme. However, the Board considered that there was a lack of evidence of making in the students' portfolios.

The Board acknowledged that the 12 month period prior to the present visit had been a difficult one for the School. However, it considered that the three recommendations from the 2004 Visiting Board relating to Part Two appeared to point to an embedded problem as it could find little evidence to suggest that these had been resolved although it is clear that the will to do so exists. The mid-term monitoring visit in 2007 described the steps the school was taking to address this. The External Examiners confirmed that the previous year's work had improved. Even so, the Board remained concerned that these problems persisted.

The Board refers the School to paragraph 10.4.4 of the 2004 Report. ["The Board found that the final presentation work produced by students on the Graduate Diploma fell short of what they would expect of Part Two graduates. The Board thus recommends that the School provide more guidance for students on techniques and standards required in the presentation of their final design work.']. The Board considered that little progress had been made in this area.

The Board considered that design and technical ambition remain weak, as previously raised by the Visiting Board of 2004. There was a lack of ambition and that the question of integration of science and technology had not yet been fully resolved.

The Board noted recent developments that have the potential to encourage a greater level of ambition in

students, namely the Croydon project and the move to a unit structure. A unit structure may allow for a more sophisticated brief-writing system. In recognising the potential of the Croydon project, the Board advises that other facets of the profession are invited to become involved.

The Board noted that the Part Two programme is due to be rewritten in 2009 once the architecture benchmark statement has been agreed. The Board understood that the module structure would be designed around the programme rather than the programme being driven by the module structure. This provides the opportunity to enrich the Part Two programme considerably.

The Board requests that the School submit the new programme to the New Courses and Course Changes Group in time for its meeting in September 2009. Comments would also be forwarded to the Validation Committee for noting. The Board recommends that the head and staff articulate their statement of intent for the Diploma in relation to the ongoing issues raised at the 2004 Visiting Board and the mid-term visit in January 2007. The Board hopes that this will address the issues raised by the 2004 Visiting Board.

In the light of the intended review of the Part 2 the Board recommends that the School continues to address the areas identified in the 2004 Report as well as those included within this report and that an appropriate timescale can be agreed for their full implementation prior to the next mid-term visit in 2010. The Board recommends that if at all possible a statement of intent be forwarded to the New Courses and Course Changes Group in September 2009.

The Board supports the ethos of the programme, particularly at Diploma level and supports the rewriting of the programme. The Board hopes that this will address the issues raised by the 2004 Visiting Board. The Board recommends that a statement of intent be forwarded to the New Courses and Course Changes Group in September 2009. It is recommended that the statement of intent should address the following points:

- What is meant by thinking through making and the manifestation of it. The School should re-examine the relevance of thinking through making as an academic theme.
- The integration of technology and environment.
- It is recommended that the School articulate the identity of the four new vertical studios.

The Board noted that the issue of specialist input has only just started to be addressed.

13.6.2 Course design and content

The Board considered that changes in structure to a unit system might help the programme's ambition. The School should take advantage of the opportunity to revise the Part Two programme to raise ambition.

The programme is also run in part-time mode, which is integrated with the full-time course to enable students to have an experience as close as possible to that to the full time students.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Graduate Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Design.

The Board considered that it was useful that students, whose work was under review, were using the same physical context in years 5 and 6 in Woolwich. The students undertake collaborative analysis of the site which is a positive aspect. In year 5 students are given a brief and in year 6 they develop their own brief from a given site. The Board found this approach believable and credible. The way in which they work with context in years 5 and 6 is positive.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Graduate Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Technology and Environment.

An intensive series of lectures is held in the fifth year. Students are also required to produce a report on a topic of their choice and must also make a presentation to their group.

The Board considered that the issue of integration of technology in the design work still presented a problem. The Board considered that sustainability should be thought about in a more integrated way as there was not much evidence in non-design work. The Board also identified some problems with materiality. At present there is not enough understanding underpinning the

choice of material. The decision-making process about materials should be more informed.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Graduate Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Cultural Context.

The Board appreciated that students were required to write dissertations. Students also had the opportunity to take part in student exchanges, hosting students at Kingston in the first semester and studying at the visiting students' universities for the subsequent semester.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Graduate Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Communication.

The Board would have appreciated more evidence of models. The Board understands issues of space and storage but advises that students need to record their models or use of models to develop and represent a scheme. The Board advises that the School consider other formats and media and needs to consider different methods of representation. The Board noted the lack of sketchbooks, except in the highest pass.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Graduate Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Management, Practice and Law.

The Board recommends that resources are increased to support this and to allow the innovative approach at Part Three to blossom in the Part Two.

13.6.4 Progression within the course
Progression and completion rates are healthy.

13.6.5 Assessment:
Assessment methods appear robust and appropriate. Students benefit from the support of visiting tutors over the summer. Compensation is not permitted.

13.6.6 Admissions and arrangements for direct entry at a stage other than the start of the course
Numbers at Part Two are increasing once more which is a positive development. The number of entrants from other schools of architecture is also increasing. The minimum entry requirement is a first or second class Honours degree in architecture or exemption from Part One by appropriate means. Students in the latter category must also present a portfolio and evidence of requisite IELTS scores. Kingston Part One graduates with a First or 2.1 degree are automatically given a place. Applicants from other schools are interviewed with portfolio or, if unable to attend interview, forward a copy with an applicant statement.

13.7 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the Part Three

The Board commends the Part Three programme and its leader. This is clearly one of the great strengths of the School. The Board was pleased to note that it continues to be well-organised and well-managed, as highlighted by the

previous Visiting Board in 2004. The Part Three external examiners were impressive; they clearly understood (and are very much involved in) the Part Three programme and are strongly supportive of it. The continuity of delivery facilitated by the programme leader and the external examiners is very strong.

The programme is creative, innovative and provides a good basis for practice. It is delivered through a series of keynote lectures, seminars, guided case-study material and self-directed study. The Board believes that it could positively inform management, practice and law in Parts One and Two, thus making this one of the outstanding features of the School.

The course is Modular with students completing a series of scenario based assignments which are assessed. There is therefore no formal final examination and it is not lecture-based; rather students are expected to, with the normal PEDR requirements, address a series of practice-based problems and submit a 10000 word evaluation and critical analysis of their total professional experience with a professional portfolio of work undertaken in practice. The professional interview follows in the normal way.

Students are expected to source their own information as this is a key skill they will need for the future. The course is sufficiently flexible to allow students working in diverse backgrounds to be successful. Another unusual element is the integrative project; in which students are required to write a 3000 word study on a topic of their choice about practice on an individual basis, a group project and a group presentation. Professional and school examiners attend a whole day event at which this is presented.

The Board was impressed at the level of independence that was expected of candidates. The professional examiners praised the methodology of making them think about what they are submitting; candidates consider their work in an integrated way. The practice scenarios in particular were commended.

Continuous assessment was considered challenging but seemed to make candidates think about what they are doing. The professional examiners commented that candidates needed to be challenged to be more critical and analytical. Externals see the final module which has various components which allow them to establish whether the student has met the criteria. The interview is used to explore issues in greater depth.

The Visiting Board was pleased to note the intention to bring in additional resources at Part Three and advises that this be implemented.

Admissions requirements are appropriate.

14.8 **External examining arrangements**

The Board was pleased to meet a large group of external and Part Three professional examiners.

The Externals confirmed that the School is positive in responding to comments. There is good continuity of external examining service and experience. Externals considered that they were well briefed by the staff. At present Part Three examiners do not have a formal induction process but will be moving to the formal University external examiners' induction. Part One external examiners are encouraged to undertake an induction. Previously Part 3 Examiners were External

Examiners and were invited and did attend the University Induction. A special induction will be offered to Prof Examiners as this system is fully implemented.

The Externals considered that assessment and moderation processes are robust and appeared to be clear about their own role at Parts One and Two. Externals are asked to confirm that all students have met all criteria. Examiners were strongly supportive of the school, expressing confidence in the staff and the new head of school. The Examiners shared the staff's optimism that the School was back on track and could take advantage of its proximity to art and design to nurture the thinking through making ethos.

External examiners considered that the programmes are robust and that this should give the staff and students the confidence to push boundaries. They praised staff and students for coping with the last year in spite of difficulties. They reported that students were happy and were pleased that the Part Two, in particular, was recruiting more strongly again.

One note of caution was sounded regarding the head of school's proposals; while they were coherent and ambitious, they might be considered optimistic as regards timescales. Externals wished to encourage staff not to be disappointed if change could not be effected as quickly as anticipated.

The contribution of ARCHILAB and its director to the School have been impressive. The Examiners were confident that students' technical understanding was sound and that issues of technology and sustainability

were being addressed. Students now need to address this critically in their work.

The Board concurred with the Examiners' view that students should understand that developmental work is as important as the finished work. Although the situation is improving, more developmental work in the shape of sketchbooks and models should be provided.

The Examiners commended the excellence, strength and individual personality of the Part Three programme, which in their opinion continually improves despite the pressure on staff. The School will be seeking more Part Three professional examiners.

The Board advises the School to seek greater diversity of background to bring additional perspectives when recruiting new examiners.

14.9 **Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience**

Part One students attend two recall days during their year out. This was reduced to one day for one year but from 2008/2009 the two separate days have been re-instated, one in November and one in March. Students submit PEDR sheets throughout the year and must complete an appraisal of their experience and accompanying 'mini portfolio' in July. Formerly one individual was Professional Studies Adviser for the whole school. A new appointment has recently been made with special responsibility for the Year Out and post-Part Two experience. It is not possible routinely to visit students in practice, although this can be done at the student's request. Contact is maintained by phone and email.

14.10 **Students;**

The Board thanks the students for their excellent self-appraisal, which it believes provides an extremely good template for the university when listening to students' opinions. There was a 60% student response to the questionnaire issued to canvass student opinion, which was very impressive.

Attendance at the student meeting was exceptional. No major overarching theme emerged, but several areas in which students suggested improvements. The following reflects the main points of the discussion:

- The School's location in a Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture is a major attraction, offering creative courses run by creative practitioners. The students appreciated the access to other resources and specialists in allied disciplines.
- Facilities have improved, particularly the workshop and the amount of space in which to work. Students appreciated the measures taken to improve studio space but commented that more would be welcome.
- Staff are accessible and approachable and teaching is good. Students believed it was up to them to take the initiative to seek help from relevant specialists, particularly for module option choices.
- The School has a family atmosphere
- Students believed that the School was moving in the right direction and that the appeal of Part Two is now greater. The changes being made and the investment in the Faculty make it more attractive. Graduates of other schools were drawn to the Kingston Part Two because of its practical nature, the culture of making, and the quality of the workshops.

- Part time staff are easy to contact. Their practice brings more benefits and they understand the needs of part-time students.
- The range of options available in the diploma, such as carving marble or bronze casting.
- Preparation for professional practice was considered very good. The Part Three was described as practical, honest and down to earth.
- The unit system has helped them to come together as a school, bridging links between the years in architecture. Being in close proximity to other arts disciplines has an effect whether conscious or unconscious.
- The cross-school integrated project is proving popular, described as 'refreshing'. Degree students feel fully involved appreciate the lead from Part Two students. It develops a sense of collective responsibility and skills and builds links through the school. Students looked forward to its ongoing development.
- Students are content with formal feedback processes and reported that tutors were also willing to offer additional time for feedback if students wish.
- Student representation is effective and issues are dealt with. Student representation is good at School level but more difficult at Faculty level.

Among aspects the students wished to improve were:

- The loss (albeit perhaps temporarily) of exhibition space in the public areas. This had provided an informal way of having a dialogue.
- The discontinued 2-week interfaculty projects
- Accessing the facilities of other schools at present is an informal process. However, this could be improved. Optional modules currently available

were considered a good way into this. Students commented that it had always been possible to use the facilities but more students need to be made aware of it. Students recognised that studio opening times were a University issue and not something over which the School had control.

- Students would appreciate more tutorial time. What they already have is good but they would appreciate more.
- It might be helpful to gain more on-site experience earlier on. Perhaps they need a greater understanding of practice on site.
- Students suggested more cross-disciplinary opportunities other programmes such as engineering and surveying. This might help make each other's work stronger.

The Board commented upon the extraordinarily diverse student body. The SSR is calculated at 22:1 according to the Faculty's formula and 18:1 according to the RIBA's suggested formula.

14.11 Staff;

The Board was pleased to meet a large number of the present complement of staff, including many part-time staff and support staff. The Board understands that it is not always possible for all staff involved in the architecture programmes to attend staff meetings during Visiting Boards, but would have appreciated the opportunity to meet the structural engineers.

There is a genuine esprit de corps among the present staff body and the Board thanks them for their candidness, honesty and engagement with the Board during the visit. The Board recognises that the last year has been difficult

and challenging for the present staff body. The Board commends them for their continued enthusiasm and commitment.

Staff are enthusiastic and evidently committed to their work, the students and the School. Although they have worked well together as a team and organisation has been good at programme level, staff are looking forward to more direction at school level. Improvements were already being seen. Staff welcomed the new head of school and were optimistic about the School's future.

The Kingston staff body is also distinctive by virtue of the fact that almost all staff are practising architects. There is also laudable diversity; in particular the Board noted the high number of women. Diversity of staff background and approach gives students a broad set of staff resources. The contribution of so many part time staff is positive. Part-time staff feel fully a part of the staff body and supported by the School. The Croydon project has helped part time staff to feel connected and involved. Communication between heads of year and the head of school is good.

Staff hoped that there would be greater opportunity to capitalise on the possibilities for interdisciplinary working both with the faculty and across faculties. The staff were optimistic that resources will be used to best advantage and that more staff time will be allowed for students. The staff are anxious about the possibility that they may lose some studio space in the reorganisation and believe that they need more and better space.

The new post of Academic Support Manager was welcomed by staff. This role was created by the Faculty to relieve academic staff of much of their administrative burden.

14.12 **Research;**

Historically the School has not had a strong research identity but there is will and ambition to develop. The University sees research as an important strategic priority. Its definition of research is broad, encompassing the creative, the practical and the professional and wishing to synthesise these. The University has implemented a new way of locating areas in which it will undertake research which it believes will be fruitful. Research and enterprise are seen as integrated.

The University's approach focusses on research centres within faculties rather than across faculties. Staff reported that while it is possible to engage in cross-faculty research, historically this has not necessarily been encouraged. The staff hope that with the conclusion of RAE 2008, research structures might become more fluid. Many staff are research active, including part-time staff, who were attracted to the School by the research potential.

The University has a great deal of experience of teachers engaged in teaching through making. The five research centres in the faculty are presently rather large. The intended strategy is that these have an umbrella function over smaller clusters. Staff reported that there was a forward thinking university research office which picks up the potential for research and grants and alerts faculties to funding opportunities. These are often targeted to individual members of staff.

The number of masters students is encouraging and the School is attracting more applicants from other universities. All postgraduate students are encouraged to engage in teaching.

Knowledge transfer partnerships, PhD studentships, collaborative studentships, have all arisen from the foundation of Archilab. It has also had a positive impact on the validated programmes and yet more remains to be done. The effects of Archilab are truly integrated with design. The Board looks forward to seeing its continued growth of influence the continued growth of its influence on validated programmes.

The Faculty also houses the Sustainable Design Research Centre (alternative modes of working through time in academia.)

The Board considered that research needed to inform the programmes to a greater extent. The Board considered that the Croydon initiative provided great opportunities to instigate and develop links between teaching and research and for practice based research. Research through practice has great potential particularly given the rising number of practices involved in the School's activities.

As reported in the Critical Self-Appraisal the School is seeking to establish a strategy for disseminating its work through SCAL:e (SCHOOL of Architecture and Landscape with the e standing for 'event', 'edition' or 'electronic' in conjunction with the faculty's graphic design course). The stated intention is to produce a cross-media platform encompassing print, publications and a website.

14.13 **Equal Opportunities**

The University has appropriate equal opportunities policies in place. In its documentation for the Visiting Board the School had provided a detailed breakdown and analysis of the student body for all validated programmes.

The Board was struck by the diversity of the staff and student bodies.

14.14 **Resourcing and facilities**

The University's estates policy has undergone radical change since the last Visiting Board, at which point negotiations were underway to buy the Surrey County Council buildings in Kingston. Since this property is no longer for sale alternative schemes are being investigated. The University is now engaged in refurbishing Knight's Park according to priority of need and feasibility. Improvements will be carried out over two to three years as the building will remain in constant use. The present campus fosters a sense of collegiality which the University wishes to preserve.

The Faculty Development plan involves changes to the use and distribution of space at the Knight's Park campus. The main entrance will be relocated and the library may be brought to the ground floor. All of this may potentially affect the space architecture presently occupies. The Board learnt that at present architecture has one of the smallest allocations of space per student, of the design-based programmes' Space allocation is the subject of ongoing discussion. Staff are concerned that historically the University has not fully understood the resource needs of design-based disciplines.

The School benefits from being in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture with facilities for digital design, photography and so forth. However, the impact of the improved workshops (improved facilities and access to them) has yet to be seen in student work.

Staff and students mentioned lack of exhibition space and hope that this might be restored when the main entrance is relocated once more. Lack of storage space has been addressed.

- *Studios*

The School has arrived at a workable solution to accommodate the rising number of students and the lack of space. Students are provided with a base room near the studios and storage space for work. There is also a bookable room adjacent to the workshops in which they can store collective projects.

The combination of hot desking in workshops, IT labs and studios appears to be working. The school is evaluating its efficacy and the results of this will be fed into the faculty plan.

The Board was told that the University would not extend studio opening times until the whole campus is accessible to disabled people.

- *Library*

The School benefits from having an in-house Learning Resource Centre which houses Art, Design and Architecture collections. Systems link the library to the other library sites across the university, enabling items not in the Knight's Park collection to be brought in as necessary. Some items are held at Kingston Hill. Students may also use other libraries across London. The Board considered that the library was impressively laid out.

The issue of loss of direct access to the library, mentioned in the 2004 Visiting Board report, has now been resolved.

The Board was impressed by the subject librarian, who is also subject librarian for Architecture and Landscape, History of Art and Design and the breadth of knowledge she brings to the role.

The total Faculty library budget for last year was £150k, of which £30k was spent on architecture. As the budget is student-number driven, it has steadily increased year by year. Student numbers and needs are analysed, allowing library staff to identify areas for improvement. There is also a Learning Resource Centre Access Scheme for students with disabilities. The library also provides a group area and small seminar room which are used a great deal.

Inductions are held during the school induction week at the beginning of the academic year. Research skills are covered in the study skills module which is compulsory for first years. Students are also welcome to make appointments to see the subject librarian on an individual basis. Diploma students also receive an induction.

At present the Library houses 36000 journals and subscribes to 40-50 e-journals. E-journals and databases can be accessed off-site if required. The architecture print collection at Knights Park comprises 7600 items but naturally the rest of the collection houses material from cognate professions and subject areas. There is also a technical collection in Archilab to which all students have access.

The acquisitions policy is relatively informal and flexible. The subject librarian encourages tutors to send booklists. Staff also make use of management reports and analyse

interlibrary loans to identify whether certain items should form part of the Knights Park collection.

The Library is open until 9pm on weekdays and until 5pm at weekends, including Sundays. In the planned reorganisation it is possible that the Library may move to the ground floor, offering increased opening hours?

- *IT*

Students have access to both Faculty and departmental facilities.

The Board considered that the School had some of the better IT packages available. These included Indesign, Acrobat Professional, Dreamweaver and Flash, Rhinoceros 4.0 Suite, Architectural Desktop 200, Autodesk 3D Studio Max 9, Graphisoft Archicad 10.5, Nemetschek Vectorworks 12.5 and Google Sketch Up Professional.

The CAD suite, which is a cross-faculty facility, has been refurbished to provide more Macs. Machines in this room are now dual-boot which the Board commends. The CAD suite is open at the weekends. Although access is good, the School is constantly pushing for longer opening hours; however there remain issues of maintenance and security. The suite is also equipped with projectors for lectures. A second suite with older machines is also available. A computer suite next to the library chiefly provides word processing facilities. There is excellent penetration of computers and projectors in home rooms and studios. Studios are now wireless.

The School commented that they might benefit from the expertise of individuals whose sole interest is concerned with software.

The Board considered that student work could vary from too much use of digital equipment to not enough.

The School hires additional printers at the end of term, which was appreciated by the students.

- *Workshops*

The Board considered that ARCHILAB was an excellent and impressive facility. It is intended to provide a three way stance supporting the practitioner, the academic and the researcher. This provides equipment for three main areas; acoustics, lighting and comfort. ARCHILAB provides an ideal ground for the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

There is an artificial sky and heliodon, thermal imaging equipment sound meters and professional digital photography equipment. It is also equipped with the latest specification PC and Mac computers that run a variety of software packages including CAD and 3D modelling systems, industry leading environmental analysis software, energy and carbon emission tools, visualisation programmes and digital manipulation software. Equipment is made available to local practices and a consultancy service is also under development.

The Faculty has invested heavily in the workshops in the last two years, proving a superb Faculty facility that is now more accessible to all, through improved opening hours and improved access to students from different disciplines. This enables the School to realise its ethos of thinking

through making. These developments have been enthusiastically welcomed by staff and students. The Board praised the wonderful equipment and the policy of encouraging students to interrogate what they believed the most appropriate equipment for their project.

Metal and woodwork are now together. The Board was impressed with the metalwork machines. Students are able to work on a first come first served basis, but may have to book specific machines. Students may work in a variety of materials including bronze and stone. There is also a foundry. This had been a Fine Art workshop only, but was now opened to all students. All staff are now inducted to use the workshop, which had not previously been the case. A representative fraction of design teaching staff from across the school have been inducted, but not all.

Other facilities include a Digital Media Workshops, Photography Studios, Premier Filming Space, Animation Suite, Post Production Suite, Sound Recording Suite Printmaking Studio and 3D Workshop

Compliance with DDA (observation).

The University is taking the necessary steps to comply with legislation.

15. Documentation

The School provided all documentation prior to and during the visit as required under the procedures.

16. Summary of 2004 Visiting Board report.

“10.1 The validated programmes are delivered by Kingston University's School of Architecture and Landscape. The School is part of the Faculty of Art, Design and Music and is based at the University's Knights

Park Campus in purpose designed studio accommodation. The School has gone through a period of significant change since the last Visiting Board. The major change in design teaching has been the shift from a vertical studio or atelier system in both Part One and Part Two to year-based design studios.

“10.2 At the time of the visit, the School was experiencing a period of significant development following the appointment of an inspirational new Head in 2002/3. The School's traditional commitment to model making and 3D exploration is being retained, but with the acquisition of a state-of-the-art Digital Media Suite, computer based representation is now being much better supported. Staff student relationships have remained close despite the recent increase in numbers recruited to the Part One programme. The School's well-managed Part Three programme recruits strongly and operates a rigorous and thorough assessment regime.

“10.3 Specific strengths of the School included:

- a cohesive and energetic staff team including substantial input from practitioners;
- its base within a lively creative art and design environment;
- a healthy studio culture and appropriate purpose designed studio spaces;
- recent successes in the RIBA President's Medals competitions;
- a strong tradition of model-making and exploration of design through material exploration;
- accessible and supportive teaching staff;
- an inspirational new Head of School;
- graduates well-prepared for subsequent employment in practice;

- the impressively managed, thoroughly taught and carefully assessed Part Three programme;
- an excellent library facility on site.

“10.4 Recommendations 2004

The Board has made the following recommendations 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.

“10.4.1 The Board was concerned about the overall lack of ambition of some of the lowest pass work seen in design portfolios at Part Two level. The Board was reassured that the School is aware of this issue and is seeking to address this by restructuring design work in the second year of Part Two and by improving the quality of intake to the Part Two course. The Board believes that this should be given the highest priority and also recommends that the School considers the appointment of a Visiting Professor (or dedicated visiting design tutor) with the specific remit of encouraging greater ambition in Part Two design work.

“10.4.2 The Board applauded the approach of embedding technology and environment teaching within the design projects undertaken in the second year of the Part Two. The Board heard that the School was reconsidering the timing of the technology inputs and the requirements it imposes on its students to demonstrate engagement with issues of technology and environment. The Board strongly

recommends that the School pursue this approach. It believes that requiring students to demonstrate that their briefs will allow them to meet the criteria in this area will help ensure that technological and environmental issues better inform design outcomes.

“10.4.3 The Board noted the School's recent recruitment of a specialist architectural technology lecturer, but recommends that Part Two students also need additional specialist input in structures to substantially strengthen work in this area.

“10.4.4 The Board found that the final presentation work produced by students on the Graduate Diploma fell short of what they would expect of Part Two graduates. The Board thus recommends that the School provide more guidance for students on techniques and standards required in the presentation of their final design work.

“10.5 **Advice 2004**

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:

“10.5.1 The Board noted the comments of External Examiners that standards on the Part One course had been rising steadily in recent years. The Board agreed that minimum pass standards in the Part One work examined had been set at an appropriate level, but would advise the School to keep minimum pass standards under constant review to ensure that current standards are maintained or enhanced.

“10.5.2 The Board advises the School to reconsider its assessment strategy for Part Two written work to ensure that it allows graduates to fully demonstrate in-depth critical appraisal.

“10.5.3 The Board commends the approach of joint teaching to architecture and landscape students in year one of the Part One course. The Board advises that further links, later in the Part One, might be helpful in strengthening the contextual work in the landscape and urban design areas.

“10.5.4 The Board welcomed the assurance offered by the Vice Chancellor that staff of the School would be involved in the design of the accommodation to be occupied by the School when it moves to Surrey County Hall. The Board would advise the University that two of the Faculty's clear strengths, its strong studio culture and its workshop facilities, should be protected in the move.

“10.5.5 Architecture students reported that they had not been able to access the majority of the workshop facilities and had been restricted to a small workshop equipped primarily with hand tools. The Head of School confirmed that an Action Plan was in place which should ensure that all students who wished to use the workshop facilities would be equipped to do so by semester two of the current academic year. The Board advises the School to ensure that the Action Plan is fully implemented and that all students are thus able to take advantage of the excellent workshop facilities available.

“10.5.6 The Board recognised that the mode of operation of the Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Practice of Architecture was significantly more demanding on staff

time than was the case with Part Three courses in other schools. It would advise the School that additional academic and support staff input will be required to sustain the course if existing recruitment levels are maintained. This is particularly the case given the increased demands on the Course Leader/PSA made by the new PEDR system.

“10.5.7 The Board learned that the School had chosen to appoint all its Part Three Professional Examiners as full External Examiners and to designate one as the Senior Examiner, but requires all of them to submit formal reports to the University. The Board was satisfied that this arrangement conformed to the RIBA requirements, but

felt that it did not necessarily result in the clearest or most efficient delineation of responsibilities. The School is thus advised to reconsider the examiner arrangements for its Part Three.

“10.5.8 The Board had some concerns regarding the School's approach to its part-time Graduate Diploma course. Although it noted that some progress had been made in extending library opening hours and improving access to workshops, the Board would advise the School to continue in its efforts to provide comparability in the student experience of full- and part-time students.”