

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Confirmed Report of the RIBA  
Visiting Board to Leeds  
Metropolitan University**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 19 March 2008

**Leeds School of Architecture, Landscape &  
Design**

**Part One: Bachelor of Arts with Honours in  
Architecture**

**Part Two: Postgraduate Diploma in  
Architecture**

**Part Three: Postgraduate Diploma in  
Architectural Professional Studies**

**Date of Visiting Board: 15-16 November 2007**

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**1. Information About the Courses**

**1.1 Courses offered for revalidation:**

Leeds Metropolitan University, Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Architecture, Part One, 3 years full-time, 6 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two, 2 years full-time or 4 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies Part Three, part-time,

**1.2 Address of the Institution where the courses are delivered**

Leeds School of Architecture, Landscape & Design  
Hepworth Point  
Claypit Lane  
Leeds  
LS2 8BQ

Tel: 0113 812 4081  
Fax: 0113 812 3190  
Web: [www.leedsmet.ac.uk](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk)

**1.3 Name of Awarding Body**  
Leeds Metropolitan University

**1.4 Name of Head of School**  
Chris Royffe

**1.5 Name of Head of Architecture**

Tony Rees

**2. Membership of the Visiting Board**

**2.1** The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on Thu. 15 to Fri. 16 November 2007 were:

Robert Hutson	(Chair)
Peter Beacock	(Vice Chair)
Elsbeth Clements	
Erejuwa Duncan	
Eleanor McAllister	(Co-professional Member)
Kevin Davis	(Student/Graduate Member)
Dawn Jenkins	(Regional Representative)

Chris Ellis (RIBA) was in attendance as secretary to the Board.

Elsbeth Clements was taken ill and was unable to attend the sessions on the second day of the visit. The Board remained quorate throughout.

**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, (as amended at RIBA Validation Committee 19.05.05), the 'RIBA Criteria for Validation', published March 2002, effective from September 2003, and the RIBA 'Description & Regulations for the Recognition of Courses and Examinations in Professional Practice and Management, (Part Three)', published Nov 2003.

For more information see [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

#### **4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board to the Royal Institute of British Architects Education Committee 19 March 2008**

4.1 The Visiting Board recommends to the RIBA Education Committee:

##### **Continued Validation of:**

Leeds Metropolitan University, Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Architecture, Part One, 3 years full-time, 6 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two, 2 years full-time or 4 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies Part Three, part-time,

4.2 The next Visiting Board will take place in 2011.

#### **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 course 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 together met all points of the EU Directive.

#### **6. Criteria for Validation**

6.1 On the basis of the academic portfolios examined, the Visiting Board was satisfied that all the students graduating from the courses and examinations 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 On the basis of the academic portfolios examined, the work from the previous year of the courses listed in 4.1 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 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 4.1.

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

- 10.1 The Leeds School of Architecture is one of the oldest in the country. It was founded in 1902 under the patronage of the West Yorkshire Society of Architects and first achieved RIBA Part One recognition in 1915 and Part Two recognition in 1929. Since its formation, the School has evolved through numerous institutional changes, the most recent being in 2004 when it became “The Leeds School of Architecture, Landscape and Design within the Faculty of Arts & Society of Leeds Metropolitan University.
- 10.2 Of the School’s 900 students, approximately 300 are architecture students on the School’s Part One and Part Two courses; of these 50 are part-time. An additional 100 students are registered on the Certificate in Architectural Practice ‘year out’ course and the Part Three programme.

In addition to its traditional part-time courses, the School is pioneering ‘Learn & Earn’ and ‘Earn & Learn’ approaches in an effort to support students suffering from increasing levels of debt.

- 10.3 The School is firmly grounded in the city of Leeds with all the challenges that this presents through active regeneration projects. The School adopts a pragmatic approach to the teaching of architecture and has commendable success in producing employable graduates. Its current temporary premises provide an attractive and functional base for the School’s activities. The improved accommodation has encouraged more students to use the studios regularly leading to some congestion at times. The Board believes that the time is now right for the School to reconsider its vision, increase its ambition and reinvent itself in preparation for its move to its new permanent home in 2009.

- 10.4 The School's strengths include:
- graduates who are very employable and sought after by practice;
  - the substantial contribution to teaching made by able practitioners;
  - its engagement with the City of Leeds and its regeneration agenda;
  - developing links with other disciplines within the School and also with the School of the Built Environment;
  - excellent IT facilities.

- 10.5 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

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- 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.
- 10.5.1 The Board recommends that the School, together with its External Examiners, remain vigilant with regard to minimum pass standards in Part One design work. Students also need to be better guided to ensure that their academic portfolios contain a complete set of evidence to confirm that the Validation Criteria in this area are being met.
- 10.5.2 The Board makes a strong recommendation to the School that it should re-examine the teaching and assessment of Management Practice & Law at Part Two level and provide appropriate guidance to students to ensure that appropriate evidence is found in their academic portfolios to clearly demonstrate that the Validation Criteria in this area are being met. The teaching input to support this area also needs to be strengthened to support students in their understanding of key issues relating to their final design projects, particularly questions of procurement and costing.
- 10.6 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:
- 10.6.1 The School is advised to undertake a review of design teaching throughout the Part Two qualification. The review might investigate how the more able students could be better challenged, all students better motivated, and overall energy levels raised by changes of pace and focus in the projects set throughout the two years.
- 10.6.2 The School is advised to undertake a thorough benchmarking of its activities against comparable institutions both nationally and internationally to combat the perceived tendency for the School to be inward looking. Students should also be encouraged to widen their horizons including visiting other school's end-of-year shows to be better able to benchmark their own achievements.
- 10.6.3 In preparation for the move to their permanent new home, the staff team are encouraged to revisit the School's vision/forward plan and use this as the basis of a re-launch. The development of a clear USP might particularly support the Part Two programme by assisting the retention of more of the School's most able Part One graduates and in recruiting bright graduates from other schools.
- 10.6.4 The School is advised to look again at the learning reviews used throughout the Part One course with a view to using them to assess the ability to understand and apply knowledge rather than simply being a test of recall.
- 10.6.5 In its discussion with Part Three graduates and candidates, the Board heard that they felt that the University and School dealt with them as students rather than as candidates for a final professional examination. The Board thus advises the School to ensure that it brings an appropriately professional approach to the operation of the Part Three, including use of the RIBA's preferred term 'candidate' rather than 'student' for those enrolled on the course.

## 11. Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports

- 11.1 The last full Visiting Board to Leeds Metropolitan University was an RIBA/ARB Board held on 14-15 November 2002. The 2002 Board recommended Continued Validation of:

Leeds Metropolitan University, Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Architecture, Part One, 3 years full-time, 6 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Graduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two, 2 years full-time or 4 years part-time

Leeds Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies Part Three, part-time,

- 11.2 In its report, the 2003 Visiting Board commented:

“The 2002 Visiting Board found, through an examination of the documentation provided by the school, from meetings with staff, students and external examiners and through a thorough examination of the portfolios, that the staff had taken the advice of the last visiting board seriously. It found that the issues identified by the last Visiting Board had been addressed by the School to the

satisfaction of the 2002 Visiting Board. The 2002 Visiting Board found that overall the standards and coverage of the Criteria for Validation had improved since the last visit.”

“The 2002 Visiting Board found that the lowest pass standards at Part One and Part Two had improved and were adequate. In addition, the Board found that the School had developed its relationship with the External Examiners as recommended by the previous Visiting Board. The External Examiners reported that the School responded to their criticisms on a yearly basis and took their comments into consideration in developing the courses. The Board found that the School had reviewed the Part Two course and the coverage of the core Criteria for Validation. The School reported that efforts had been made to address the high level of referrals within the Part One and Part Two courses. The School informed the Board that all students were now interviewed prior to their admission to the course. In addition, the Board learned that the course tutors closely monitored each student’s work in the early years of the course and advised students to join another course should it be felt that their progress on the BA (Hons) Architecture was not adequate. The Board recognised that ARB and the RIBA has no formal criteria in respect of referral rates, but would recommend that the School continues to monitor this matter.”

“The 2002 Board found that the coverage of the History of Architecture had been improved through the development of the lecture course, through overseas and UK study visits and from further input from external tutors. However, the Board found that the comments in relation to the coverage of the Criteria in relation to the Theories of Architecture required further attention. The Board found little evidence in the taught elements of the

course or in the design portfolios to suggest that students were using architectural theories to underpin and inform their understanding of architecture and the design process. However, the evidence in this area that was observed by the Board was of an adequate standard. The 2002 Visiting Board recommended that the School should seek to address this at the earliest opportunity.”

## 12. Commentary

### 12.1 Self-Appraisal and Developments since the last visit

The School's Self Appraisal provided a useful starting point for the Board's deliberations, particularly the SWOT analysis. The Board was, however, disappointed that the document proposed no solutions to the weaknesses and threats identified and the tone was rather uncritical. Given that no separate student document had been provided, the Board was disappointed with the limited extent of the student input to the document. Overall the Board felt that this was a missed opportunity for a deeper analysis.

Since the last visit the major changes have included:

- the School has moved from its previous base in the Brunswick Building to temporary accommodation in Hepworth Point, prior to a move to purpose designed accommodation in three years time;
- the Part Two has been restructured; there is now a design project in each semester rather than a year long thesis project;
- IT facilities have been substantially enhanced;

- whilst the student:staff ratio is similar to that in 2002, the proportion of part-time staff has increased.

### 12.2 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit

The documentation for the visit was supplied in timely fashion and was commendably concise. It provided virtually all that was required for the Board's work, but could perhaps have been more helpfully structured and annotated. The exhibition of student's work was excellent. It was clearly set out and the amount of work was well judged. The introductions provided were clear, helpful and succinct. The Board really appreciated having students present in this session to provide additional explanations. Student academic portfolios were laid out in a way that made them very easy to access and were accompanied by clear mark sheets. The Board's only criticism was that some of the lowest pass portfolios were difficult to navigate. The programme prepared for the visit worked exceptionally smoothly.

#### 12.2.1 *Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit.*

The Board examined complete academic portfolios drawn from the 2006/7 academic year as follows:

*BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One*

Year One: 3 lowest, 2 middle and 2 high (from a cohort of 76)

Year Two: 3 lowest, 2 middle and 2 high (from a cohort of 75)

Year Three: 3 lowest, 2 middle and 2 high (from a cohort of 58)

*Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture, Part Two*

Year One: 3 lowest pass, 2 middle and 2 high (from a cohort of 25)

Year Two: 3 lowest pass, 2 middle and 2 high (from a cohort of 31)

*PGDip in Architectural Professional Studies, Part Three*

Complete sets of work from 3 lowest pass, 2 middle pass and 2 high pass candidates from the November 2006 examination session (from a cohort of 28).

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

In its critical self appraisal, the School provided a detailed commentary on its actions in response to the previous RIBA/ARB Visiting Board report plus changes that had been made in response to External Examiners Reports and also changes made in response to student comments. It was clear to this Board that the School had made strenuous efforts to respond to issues flagged by the previous Board. Specifically:

- The 2002 report suggested that the School might make further improvements in the coverage and depth of understanding achieved in architectural theory in the both the Part One and the Part Two programmes. The School has responded to this by rewriting the Architectural Context course for all three years of the BA such that it now consists of three strands in history, theory and study skills running through the course. Most architecture staff contribute to these strands allowing linkages to be made to the design programmes. At Part Two, the cultural context aspects of all studio

programmes have been reinforced by lectures and workshops.

- The 2002 Board questioned whether examinations were the most appropriate means of assessing Technology and Environment in the Part One. The School has thus replaced examinations with 'learning reviews' and by design related coursework.
- The 2002 Board had described CAD facilities as 'limited'. CAD facilities have been substantially enhanced. In addition to an open access CAD suites in the Library and Hepworth Point there are also CAD facilities in each of the studios.
- The 2002 Board recommended that the level of design ambition at Part Two could be improved. The School has developed a series of design workshops which focus on developing critical awareness and raising aspirations. A wider range of student centred programmes has been introduced to encourage personal focus and individual design challenge.

It was clear to the Board from the copies of responses to External Examiners reports they saw and from their discussions with External Examiners that the School responded quickly and appropriately to issues raised by the External Examiners in their reports.

12.4 **Context of the courses within the wider provision of the school and Faculty**

The Leeds School of Architecture, Landscape & Design is one of six schools in the University's Faculty of Arts and Society. There are three professional groups within the School: Architecture & Interior Design, Landscape Architecture and Design. The whole of the School is

housed together in Hepworth Point. In addition to the validated architecture programme, the Architecture & Interior Design Group is also responsible for an undergraduate course in Interior Architecture & Design. The group also has links with the landscape discipline elsewhere in the School. Of the other Schools in the Faculty of Arts and Society, contributions to the architecture programmes are made by staff from the School of the Built Environment and the Leeds School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design.

It was clear to the Board that some effective cross-fertilisation was developing between the disciplines in the School and elsewhere. The Board noted joint teaching with interior architecture students in the first and second years of the Part One, the increasing input to the architecture programme from landscape staff and particularly the interdisciplinary project carried out with students from built environment disciplines in year three. The Board felt that there was scope for further cross-disciplinary links with design now that the studios for the two programmes were in close physical proximity.

**12.5 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the BA (Hons) Architecture Part One**

12.5.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives  
The Board found the aims of the Part One programme to be clearly expressed and, for the most part, being achieved. Students had a good understanding of what was being expected of them.

12.5.2 Course design and content  
The course operates to a year structure. The majority of student study is in full-time mode. There is a part-time mode

available, but this is effectively a part-time route through the full-time programme rather than a dedicated part-time course. The Board found the Part One course to be well structured with an excellent progression in scale and complexity of the design projects tackled and good linkages between taught disciplines and design.

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

*- Design*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the BA (Hons) in Architecture are meeting all of the Validation Criteria in the area of Design. The Board was impressed by the overall structure of design work in the course with its progression of themes from 'house' in year one to 'community' in year two and 'city' in year three. There was also clear evidence that students progress to produce coherent, detailed architectural designs with an appropriate balance of time spent on research and final outcomes. The Board found particular strengths of the design work to be the community engagement in year two interesting and the excellent research work underpinning design outcomes in year three. The Board felt, however, that more could be done to raise the expectations of the most able students and was concerned that work at the lowest pass level was very close to the threshold. The Board thus recommends that the School, together with its External Examiners, remain vigilant with regard to minimum pass standards in Part One design work. Students also need to be better guided to ensure that their academic portfolios contain a complete set of evidence to confirm that the Validation Criteria in this area are being met.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the BA (Hons) in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Technology and Environment. The 2002 Visiting Board had described the technology and environment area as one of the strengths of the course. This Board was satisfied that the criteria were being met, but felt that it was no longer a strength. The Board learned that responsibility for the delivery of technology and environmental teaching was now in the hands of studio staff. Whilst this clearly helped in integrating technology with design work, the Board felt that the loss of specialist input was a potential worry. With the loss of one key member of staff, the Board was concerned that the School's traditionally strong engagement with issues of sustainability may be at risk.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the BA (Hons) in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Cultural Context. There was evidence that the School had responded seriously to the concerns raised by the 2002 Board. The restructuring of cultural studies teaching had substantially strengthened achievements in this area of the criteria. From some excellent exercises in the first year of the programme through to clear evidence of engagement with contextual issues in third year design projects this was now a strength of the programme.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the BA (Hons) in

Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Communication. Student's portfolios contained excellent hand drawn and computer generated visuals. With the exception of the very weakest portfolios, the overall standards of presentation were very good. The Board particularly commended the encouragement given to students to maintain sketchbooks and many of the examples seen were excellent. Visual representation was clearly a strength of the course. The Board also saw plenty of models, but felt that model-making might be used more as a developmental activity and to explore issues of materiality. Written work was only adequate. The Board also worried that, with 5000 words as the specification for the longest piece of written work, there was a limit to the student's opportunity to explore a subject in detail. In their meeting with the Board, students showed themselves to be articulate and thoughtful.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the BA (Hons) in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Management Practice & Law. The Management Practice and Law module in the third year provided a decent coverage of this area of the criteria. Assessments, via course work a phase test and a reflective diary, displayed reasonable knowledge, but not much insight.

- *Preparation for Professional Experience*

The final year Management, Practice and Law module introduces students to key practice related issues and also provides support in writing CVs and letters of application. This together with the involvement of practitioners in studio teaching and the inter-professional team project provides an excellent preparation for stage one

professional experience. Students confirmed that they felt well prepared for practice.

12.5.4 Progression within the course

The student cohort analysis shows an apparently high non-progression rate, particularly in the first year. In discussion with staff, the Board learned about the process via which diagnostic tests were used to identify students with difficulties who might be encouraged to transfer to more appropriate degree programmes. Once allowance has been made for students transferring to other degrees, failures and withdrawal rates were on a par with comparable institutions.

12.5.5 Assessment

The Board generally found the School to be using a balanced range of assessment procedures throughout the Part One programme. The Board recognises that the School had introduced its programme of ‘learning reviews’ as a response to the criticism by the 2002 Visiting Board of traditional examinations. The Board was, however, concerned at the way in which the learning reviews focussed on knowledge at the expense of understanding or application and offers the more able students little opportunity to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge. The School is thus advised to look again at the learning reviews used throughout the Part One course with a view to using them to assess the ability to understand and apply knowledge rather than simply being a test of recall.

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

The School has a target of recruiting 85 students to the BA(Hons) with a normal UCAS tariff offer of 280 points.

All UK applicants likely to achieve the minimum offer are interviewed when they are assessed on a portfolio of creative work, their knowledge of and enthusiasm for architecture. The Board commends the School for its policy of interviewing applicants. It was clear from discussions with students that the interview had been a significant factor in encouraging applicants to select Leeds as their first choice institution.

The School admits a limited number of students direct to the second year; typically only one per year. This is done on the basis of the University’s APL/APEL procedures and involves the candidate being interviewed by the course leader and year two tutor.

12.6 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture: Part Two**

12.6.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives

The Board felt that the objectives of the Part Two programme were sound, but not particularly distinctive. The Board believes that it would be in the School’s interests for the PGDip to have a more distinctive character to assist in the retention of the School’s most able Part One graduates and also to aid the recruitment of bright graduates from other schools. Although the aims refer to ‘extending the student’s capacity for innovative thinking’ the Board found the work that emerged displayed a similarity of approach. They also felt that work lacked ambition and inspiration.

12.6.2 Course design and content

The full-time version of the course has a conventional year structure consisting of two years, each of 120 credits. A

part-time route through the programme is available taking four years and involving the acquisition of 60 credits per year. Year one has a focus on urban agendas with 20 credit modules in Urban Design and Urban Building. Other compulsory modules in year one include an integrated architectural studies module and architectural workshops worth 20 credits. Students are also required to select two 20 credit optional modules. In semester one of year two students take design workshops (20 credits) and a 40 credit Building Context and Proposal Module. A 60 credit final design project in the final semester is the culmination of the Part Two.

Students registered in full-time mode, but who also have appropriate employment are able to achieve elements of the Part Two course via the generation of a learning agreement which maps experiential learning onto the specific aims of course modules. The School refers to this process as “Learn & Earn”. Similar opportunities are available to part-time students with the title “Earn & Learn”. The Board had the opportunity to examine examples of work that had been assessed via this route and found the process thorough and systematic. The Board commends this as innovative solution to the problem of student debt.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Design. The Board felt that, although validation criteria were being met at all levels, the

outcomes of design work seemed rather flat and lifeless. Although all students were achieving reasonably coherent and acceptable resolved designs, the more able students were not being challenged to produce innovative or experimental solutions. The School is advised to undertake a review of design teaching throughout the Part Two qualification. The review might investigate how the more able students could be better challenged, all students better motivated, and overall energy levels raised by changes of pace and focus in the projects set throughout the two years.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Technology & Environment. A limited number of lectures on structures, construction and environmental technology are provided within the Integrated Architectural Studies module in year one of the PGDip. Students are expected to acquire the majority of their knowledge in these areas through the design projects and their associated workshops. The Board found that this strong emphasis on integration ensured that even weaker students produced designs with acceptable technological and environmental solutions. Concerns with issues of sustainability appeared to be well-embedded.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Cultural Context. As with technology, a limited number of lectures on urban context and theory are provided within the Integrated

Architectural Studies module in year one of the PGDip. Students are expected to acquire the majority of their knowledge in contextual studies through the design projects and their associated workshops. Given this structure, the Board would have expected there to be a much more thorough engagement with context, particularly regional regeneration, than was actually visible in the student portfolios.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Communication. The Board had found a high level of communication skills displayed by Part One students, but felt that there was not much development from this in the Part Two work. In particular there was an absence of innovative and experimental approaches to presentation. Written work at Part Two level was satisfactory and the Part Two students who attended the meeting with the Board were commendably articulate.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the portfolios examined the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture are meeting all the Validation Criteria in the area of Management Practice and Law. The Board did have concerns about this area of work which is assessed entirely through the design project outcomes. The formal input in this area is via the Integrated Architectural Studies module. Unlike technology and context, there did not seem to be as much commitment to address management practice and law issues through the workshops and seminars which support the design project

work. The Board found the student academic portfolios displayed a minimal engagement with this area of the criteria, thinking on procurement and costing issues was particularly thin. The Board thus makes a strong recommendation to the School that it should re-examine the teaching and assessment of Management Practice & Law at Part Two level and provide appropriate guidance to students to ensure that appropriate evidence is found in their academic portfolios to clearly demonstrate that the Validation Criteria in this area are being met. The teaching input to support this area also needs to be strengthened to support students in their understanding of key issues relating to their final design projects, particularly questions of procurement and costing.

12.6.4 Progression within the course

Overall progression rates for the Part Two programme were good, particularly when the data on repeating students was included.

12.6.5 Assessment: methods, content and coverage, relative weightings, standards achieved

It was clear that an appropriate range of assessment vehicles were used throughout the Part Two programme. The Programme Specification contains clear procedures for progression from stage one to stage two of the programme and for the conferment of the final award. These satisfied the RIBA/ARB requirements. Students confirmed that it was clear what was being expected of them in the assessments they undertook and that the feedback they received from tutors was helpful.

12.6.6 Admissions and arrangements for direct entry at a stage other than year one.

The target entry for the Part Two programme at the time of the visit was 30 per year. Entry to the Part Two course is normally made on the basis of candidates having an honours degree in architecture with a minimum of a 2.2 or equivalent, Part One recognition from the ARB and the RIBA and practical training of at least one year. Suitable qualified candidates from schools other than Leeds will normally be interviewed with a portfolio of work covering both their academic studies and their practical training experience. The School's rules permit applications for admission with advanced standing to year two of the programme (subject to clear criteria and procedures based on the University's AP(E)L procedures), but no such admissions have been made in the last five years.

## 12.7 Detailed Commentary on the Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies: Part Three

12.7.1 On the basis of the Part Three work examined, the Board confirms that:

- All graduates from the Leeds Metropolitan University Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies are meeting all the Part Three Validation Criteria.
- minimum pass standards are being set at an appropriate level.

12.7.2 The Leeds Part Three course operates within the academic framework of Leeds metropolitan University and is validated as a Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Professional Studies. The PgDip is structured as three 40 credit modules consisting of:

- PEDR and Personal Evaluation

- Professional Practice & Contract Administration (assessed by means of two 3 hour written examinations)
- Case Study (written and oral)

Candidates are required to achieve a pass mark of 40% in each module, plus the additional requirement that they pass the one-hour professional interview (oral).

12.7.3 The Board was reassured to learn that the School was now following the RIBA Description & Regulations for Part Three in respect of the nomenclature of its examiners. In previous years, all examiners have been referred to as External Examiners. From 2006/7 there has been a clear distinction between the Professional Examiners who will set and mark examinations and conduct professional interviews and the newly appointed External Examiner who will have the responsibility of overseeing the consistency and standards of the assessed elements and the qualification as a whole.

12.7.4 The Board was concerned that the newly appointed External Examiner had no previous experience in other institutions. In discussions with the Part Three Course Tutor and the Head of Architecture, the Board was satisfied that the School had made an appropriate appointment and that the new External Examiner had undertaken a thorough training and induction process and would be supported in his first year by one of the previous External Examiners who had substantial experience of other schools. The Board accepted these reassurances, but felt that the new External Examiner should also take the opportunity to visit other schools with Part Three programmes to better equip him for his role when no longer supported by a former External Examiner.

12.7.5 The Board was provided with a detailed mapping of the course onto the RIBA/ARB Part Three Criteria. The Board explored with the Course Tutor, how this was achieved in practice given that the examinations provided candidates with a choice and that case studies could cover a variety of areas. It was explained that the professional interview was carefully structured to ensure that issues not addressed in examination answers, or questions answered badly were covered. The Board was satisfied that the procedures in place to ensure that this happened were robust.

12.7.6 In its discussion with Part Three graduates and candidates, the Board heard they felt that the University and School dealt with them as students rather than as candidates for a final professional examination. The Board thus advises the School to ensure that it brings an appropriately professional approach to the operation of the Part Three, including use of the RIBA's preferred term 'candidate' rather than 'student' for those enrolled on the course.

12.8 **External examining arrangements**

The Board confirmed that the School had in place a strong team of External Examiners drawn from both academia and practice. The Board had a formal meeting with two Part One, three Part Two and three Part Three External Examiners. The other Part One External Examiner, who was unavoidably absent, had made it clear that she was available for a discussion via the telephone. Given that they had the opportunity of a discussion with 8 out of 9 of the School's External Examiners the Board felt that this was unnecessary.

In their meeting with the Board, the External Examiners were very supportive of the School and its courses. They

confirmed that they were satisfied with the opportunities they were given to engage with the various assessment processes operated by the School which they found to be open and straightforward. They particularly welcomed the fact that all Part One and Part Two final year students are interviewed by one or other of the Externals. All had been given a clear and effective introduction to the School's courses. Although none of the Externals had attended University run induction sessions, the comment was made that the University's dedicated website for External Examiners was helpful (although not easy to find).

The Board explored with the External Examiners for all three programmes the process via which decisions were made on candidates at lowest pass level. The Board was reassured that careful and considered approaches were in place with opportunities for detailed discussion between internal and external examiners prior to final decisions being made.

The External Examiners confirmed that they received appropriate responses from the School to the issues raised in their reports and that they did see actions to address concerns they had flagged.

The only concerns that the External Examiners raised were:

- candidates getting through to the third year of Part One and then failing; should there be a clearer decision point at year two?
- the challenges of achieving consistency of marking for the final year of Part Two when students are tackling different design projects of their own choosing;

- the learning reviews in Part One are more of a memory test than a challenge to intellectual reasoning;
- a lot of the life and enthusiasm in years one and two of the Part One are lost in year three, possibly as a function of the assessment regime; might a group project provide a kick start to the third year?

#### 12.9 Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience

The School has well established systems in place to support and monitor students whilst undertaking their Stage One Professional Experience. This process is formalised through a university validated qualification: the Graduate Certificate in Professional Studies in Architecture. This comprises three 20 credit units: 'Introduction to Architectural; Practice', 'Record of Architectural Practice (PEDR)' and 'Critical Reflection & Personal Evaluation'. Following an initial induction at the start of the course, students attend two study units, one in each semester. The course leader for the Graduate Certificate also acts as the Professional Studies Advisor and thus reviews and signs student's PEDR sheets. He provides guidance for students on problems with their placements. The Board was confident that this aspect of the School's responsibilities was being well handled.

#### 12.10 Students

The Board had a lively and interesting meeting with 44 students drawn from all years of the School's courses. The Board was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to talk to several students on their Stage One Professional Experience and a substantial number of Part Three

candidates. The Board was disappointed that the student input to the School's Critical Self Appraisal was limited, but during the meeting students showed themselves to be articulate, committed to the School, but capable of serious constructive criticism.

Students identified the strengths of the School as being:

- a friendly, welcoming and approachable staff team;
- the city of Leeds as a great base for living and studying;
- the lively and supportive atmosphere in the studios;
- the excellent facilities available to students including significantly enhanced IT equipment;
- the substantial involvement of practitioners in studio teaching;
- the flexible study opportunities and excellent support provided for students studying via the part-time route;
- an environment where peer learning is encouraged and good support from fellow students;
- the allocation of personal tutors plus the existence of year tutors provides students with a range of staff to approach for help and guidance;
- the existence of good support networks throughout the School and University.

Amongst the concerns raised by students were:

- the Part One full-time tutors were stretched at key times of the year and there was limited access to part-time tutors;
- with more students making use of the studio space provided at Hepworth Point, students could be fighting for space at peak times;

- organisation and timetabling could be rather haphazard, although this had improved since the move to Hepworth Point;
- it would be good to have some younger full-time staff;
- the mixed use of studio spaces creates disruption and some work has been lost when pinned-up work has had to be taken down to allow use of the space by a different group.

The Board learned that a student architectural society had been reformed at Leeds a year ago. The society organised lectures and social events as a means of encouraging students on different years of the programmes to interact. The Board encourages the students to continue to develop their society and to also use it as a vehicle to make the student community more outward looking via programmes of visits and engagement with archaos (the national student society) etc. The Board learnt that relatively few students had taken the opportunity to visit the end of year shows at other schools and advised that more might be encouraged to do so.

#### 12.11 Staff:

The Visiting Board met a total of 27 members of staff at a well-attended meeting. A number of part-time staff drawn from practice and academics from other schools of the University were present and the Board welcomed their contribution. The School has the benefit of an established full-time staff team who bring experience and continuity, together with increasing support from part-time staff drawn from practice. The Board was pleased to see that the part-time staff were being fully involved in the process of developing briefs for the design work. The School is to be applauded for the way it has integrated the input from

its part-time staff. It is clear that these practitioners are helping to broaden the range of inputs to students. Nevertheless the Board believes that the School would benefit from an influx of new blood to the full-time teaching staff to bring new ideas, to help refresh the teaching programme and particularly to encourage students to think ‘outside the box’.

The School’s staff:student ratio is around 1:20 and has not changed since the last visit. The proportion of part-time staff has, however, increased as part of a deliberate policy of shifting the balance of teaching input from full-time to part-time teacher-practitioners. Some of the benefits of this have been referred to in the previous paragraph, but the Board felt that any further shift in this balance would put excessive administrative burdens on the full-time staff further limiting the possibility of them developing a research engagement.

During their meeting with staff, the Board explored how they saw the School’s mission and its future vision, particularly as they prepare to move to permanent new premises in a few years time. The Board felt there was a real opportunity here. As a result, the staff team are encouraged to revisit the School’s vision/forward plan and use this as the basis of a re-launch. The development of a clear USP might particularly support the Part Two programme by assisting the retention of more of the School’s most able Part One graduates and in recruiting bright graduates from other schools.

Overall in the discussion, the Board found the staff team to be rather inward looking. This was perhaps inevitable when there had been the recent challenge of moving the School to new premises. The Board felt that it was now

timely for staff to have a more outward focus and thus advised the School to undertake a thorough benchmarking of its activities against comparable institutions both nationally and internationally.

**12.12 Research**

Leeds Metropolitan University recognises that it is primarily a teaching institution, but one that aims to support and encourage its staff to be research active. Its definition of research is wide and clearly extends beyond that adopted by the HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise. A decision has been taken that the architecture staff will not be entering the 2008 RAE. One of the main themes of research within the School was that of architectural sustainability, but the professor leading that area of work has left and the School has been unsuccessful to date in its efforts to recruit a replacement. It is clear that this area of research continued to strongly inform teaching, particularly at Part Two, but in the absence of a clear leader, this strength of the course must be at risk.

**12.13 Equal Opportunities**

The University has a clear Equal Opportunities policy. It was also clear that the School takes the equal opportunities monitoring of its student population seriously and the Board was provided with impressively detailed data on the sex, age, ethnicity and disability status of students on the Part One and Part Two programmes and candidates on the Part Three for which the School is commended. The Board was, however, disappointed that there was a lack of any analysis accompanying the data. It would have been helpful, for example to have had a commentary on the fact that recent recruitment to the Part One programme included a significantly higher proportion of students from

ethnic minority backgrounds than the national average, but a lower proportion of females.

The data provided for the staff team showed that the School had increased its proportion of female staff since the last visit, but several of the staff are approaching normal retirement age. The School itself in the Critical Self Appraisal identifies the need to make some ‘new blood’ appointments as a priority

**12.14 Resourcing and facilities:**

*- General*

The School moved from its former base in the Brunswick Building to accommodation specially refurbished for its needs in a building within the University’s Cultural Quarter known as Hepworth Point. Studios for landscape architecture, interior architecture and design are in the same building encouraging interaction between the students on these programmes. The Board felt that the building had got a rather corporate feel to it, but felt that it provided better quality spaces than the School previously had access to in the Brunswick Building. Hepworth Point also houses well-equipped teaching spaces, but these are booked centrally, a situation that is not ideal given the flexibility required to run an effective architecture programme where teaching inputs are often geared to design studio work.

*- Studios*

Good quality spaces have been provided as studios for years one and three of the BA programme on the ninth floor of Hepworth Point and for year two of the BA and both years of the Part Two on the eighth floor. A problem

faced by the School is that the provision of this good quality accommodation has encouraged more students to work in the studios. This is clearly a positive development, but it is causing overcrowding in the studios at peak time. Students reported their perception that the allocation of space for architecture students was less generous than that for design and interior architecture students. The Board had a very positive meeting with the University's Pro Vice-Chancellor, who articulated the University's commitment to the School. The Board thus hopes that University management will appreciate the importance of facilities which support a healthy studio culture as they design the new permanent facilities that the courses will be moving to in the future.

*- IT*

The 2003 Report commented that IT facilities were limited. There has clearly been very substantial enhancement and this Board found the facilities to be excellent. Extensive IT suites on the first, second and third floors of the University Cultural Quarter Library are equipped with PCs running a good range of standard software for word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentations, email plus access to the internet. A range of scanning, plotting and printing facilities are adjacent to each suite. The fourth floor of the library houses a CAD suite with an extensive range of specialist software for students from the Schools of Architecture, Landscape & Design and the Built Environment. The suite is made up of three separate laboratories equipped with both PCs and Macs and running an extensive range of CAD and image manipulation software. Two of the labs are configured for group teaching, but available for open access when not booked, the third is permanently open access. Software available includes Auto CAD, Sketchup, Architectural

Desktop, SuperCAD, SuperProject, 3D Studio Viz, Arcview, Photoshop etc.

In addition to the facilities in the Library there is an IT lab on the third floor of Hepworth Point exclusively for the use of students in the School, with access again to wide range of CAD software, plus computers distributed through the studio spaces. Students confirmed that the IT facilities were excellent; they particularly appreciated the free colour printing available in the studios and CAD area at Hepworth Point.

*- Workshop*

In addition to the model-making area at Hepworth Point architecture students have access to more extensive workshops in the School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design and School of the Built Environment, both close at hand.

*- Library*

The University's main Library for its Civic Quarter campus is in the Leslie Silver Building about five minutes walk from the Hepworth Point Building. The Library contains an impressive and up-to-date collection of architectural text together with UK and international journals. The same library serves the other courses in the School of Architecture, Landscape & Design and those operated by the School of the Built Environment and the Leeds School of Contemporary Art & Graphic Design. This provides architecture students with ready access to texts across the full spectrum from arts to technology. The Library has a policy of buying multiple copies of core texts and attempts to make these as accessible as possible by housing them in a separate short loans collection. The Library has a large collection of audio visual materials,

including an extensive and impressive slide library which it hopes soon to digitise.

A specialist subject librarian provides support for architecture students ranging from initial induction sessions to specialist literature searching workshops for students about to embark on their dissertations. These sessions are supported by 'skills for learning' web pages and downloadable library and information services guides.

Changes in the provision since the last Visiting Board have included:

- 24 hour opening of the whole building with a virtually full range of facilities including self-issue and return stations;
- Electronic versions of many key journals are now subscribed to
- Students have access to electronic materials from off-site
- Substantial enhancement of the IT and CAD suites in the Library
- The establishment of a well equipped 'Disability Resource Area'.

The Board found the library facilities to be excellent.

*- Other Facilities*

Photographic facilities are available to students in the Media Suite on the third floor of Hepworth Point which also houses a heliodon, artificial sky and a model rig. A Technical Reference Library is also located on the third floor of Hepworth Point.

### 13. Attachments

13.1 Prior to the Visit, members of the Visiting Board received:  
 School's Critical Self Appraisal  
 Completed Questionnaire  
 Mapping Documents for Parts One, Two and Three  
 Programme Specifications for Parts One Two and Three  
 Supplementary Information  
 CVs for External Examiners  
 External Examiners Reports for the three validated courses 2002/3 to 2006/7  
 Responses to External Examiners Reports

13.2 Copies of the following were made available in the Baseroom:  
 Boxes for each year of the BA(Hons) containing:

- Outline syllabi for modules
- Briefs for Design Modules
- Module Guides

plus for year three:

- Rome study visit diary
- Details of urban interventions undertaken by year

Box for PG Dip Architecture containing:

- Student Guidelines for PGDip 06/07
- Briefs for Design Modules
- Outline syllabi for modules
- Details of workshops
- Details of "Earn & Learn" and "Learn & Earn" work based learning options

Detailed Staff CVs  
 Undergraduate Prospectus 2007 and 2008  
 Postgraduate Prospectus 2006/7

Course leaflets for Architecture, Interior Architecture & Design, Landscape Architecture, Garden Design and Urban Design, Design  
Professional Development Brochures for Arts & Technologies and Architecture, Construction & Planning.  
Additional Examples of “Learn & Earn” and “Earn & Learn” submissions

- 13.3 During the visit, the Board requested and received copies of the following:  
Breakdown of full-time and part-time student numbers on each course  
Average A level points totals for the last four Part One intakes  
2004 QAA Institutional Audit: University Submission, QAA Report and University Response.
- 13.4 The Board also had access in the Baseroom to a networked computer allowing access via the University’s intranet to other University documents and additional examples of student group project work.