

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board  
to Liverpool John Moores  
University**

**Centre for Architecture  
Liverpool School of Art & Design  
Faculty of Media, Arts & Social Science**

**Part One: BA (Hons) Architecture  
Part Two: Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture**

**Date of Visiting Board: 04 - 05 March 2004**

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**1. Information About the Courses**

**1.1 Courses offered for revalidation:**

Liverpool John Moores University BA (Hons)  
Architecture, Part One, 3 years full-time

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

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

Centre for Architecture  
Liverpool School of Art & Design  
Liverpool John Moores University  
St Nicholas Centre  
Great Orford Street  
Liverpool  
L3 5YD

T: 0151 231 3704  
F: 0151 707 2953  
W: [www.livjm.ac.uk](http://www.livjm.ac.uk)

**1.3 Name of Awarding Body**

Liverpool John Moores University

**1.4 Name of Head of Centre**

Professor Mads Gaardboe  
Ian Wroot (from 15 March 2004)

**2. Membership of the Visiting Board**

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 04 - 05 March 2004 were:

Frank Woods	(Chair)
Mary Jane Rooney	(Vice Chair)
M.M. Ereomajuwa Duncan	
Robert Mull	
John Hickey	(Regional Nominee)
Chris Joel	(Non-Architect Member)
Andy Bourne	(Graduate Member)

Dr Chris Ellis (Head of Validation, RIBA) was in attendance as Secretary to the Board.  
Andrew Beard (Chair, RIBA Validation Committee) attended the first day as an observer.  
Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk (RIBA Validation Co-ordinator) attended the whole of the event as an observer

**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 and the 'RIBA Criteria for Validation', published March 2002, effective from September 2003

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

#### 4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board

4.1 The Visiting Board recommends to the RIBA Education Committee:

**Continued Validation** of:

Part Two: Liverpool John Moores University Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture, two years full-time or four years part-time.

4.2 The Visiting Board recommends to the RIBA Education Committee:

**Conditional Continued Validation** of:

Part One: Liverpool John Moores University BA (Hons) Architecture, three years full-time.

4.3 The Board considered only the Centre's Part One and Part Two programmes. Part Three is now delivered for Liverpool John Moores University and others in the region by the RIBA North West Region and has been independently validated.

4.4 The next full Visiting Board will take place in 2008.

#### 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 qualifications, subject to the

satisfactory discharge of the condition identified in section 8.

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, subject to the satisfactory discharge of the condition identified in section 8, the Part One & Part Two 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).

6.2 On the basis of the sample of academic portfolios examined, the Visiting Board was satisfied, except in respect of the issues identified in sections 8 & 10.4.1, that all the students graduating from the course and examinations listed in 4.2 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 sample of academic portfolios examined, the work from the previous year of the courses listed in 4.1 and 4.2 inspected during the visit was found

to meet the required standards with the exception of the two lowest pass final year Part One portfolios.

## 8. Conditions of Validation

The Visiting Board recommends that the course listed in 4.2 receive conditional continued validation. The following conditions of recognition apply:

Part One: Liverpool John Moores University BA (Hons) Architecture, three years full-time;

- i. The submission by the University to the RIBA, within three months of the receipt of this report, of a letter providing the RIBA with reassurance that compensation will not be employed in the assessment of Part One candidates in a way that could allow students to graduate without satisfying all validation criteria. An appropriate mechanism must be in place for the 2004 assessment boards.
- ii. A visit to the Centre should take place in Summer 2004 by the Chair and two other members of the Board (one academic and one practitioner), to:
  - review the operation of mechanisms put in place to ensure that all graduates from the Part One programme have met all Validation Criteria.
  - review a sample of Part One portfolios including those for the three lowest pass candidates to establish that they are of an acceptable standard.

## 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 and 4.2.

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

- 10.1 The Board found the Centre to be in the midst of significant changes. Since the last visit, the Centre had moved from the School of the Built Environment to the School of Art & Design. It had moved to different premises in the St Nicholas Centre. It had experienced a substantial increase in its Part One intake. At the time of the visit a newly appointed Head of Centre was about to take over following the move of the existing Head back to Australia. Despite all these changes the Board found the School to be in good heart, with a clear shared sense of purpose and direction and with good support from the parent School and Faculty.
- 10.2 The Board found that the reorganisation of the Part One course, following the recommendations of the 2000 Visiting Board, had resulted in a well structured course, strongly delivered and providing good coverage of the criteria. The Board was unable to confirm on the basis of the academic portfolios supplied that all graduates from

the Part One were meeting all Part One Validation Criteria. The Board had specific concerns regarding the two lowest pass final year Part One portfolios. The portfolios were incomplete. Although an explanation was provided for this, the Board was unable to reassure itself that the scope of the design work undertaken and the standard of design outcomes achieved in these portfolios were sufficient to warrant a pass at Part One level. The Board believes that the Centre has the capacity to satisfy a subgroup that this is the case at a revisit to be organised in summer 2004.

10.3 The Part Two course was in the process of being restructured at the time of the Board's visit to more clearly map onto the new Part Two Validation Criteria. The Board found the existing course as run in 2002/3 to be entirely capable of supporting students to satisfy the new criteria. New initiatives were commended, particularly the seven 24 hour workshops which were seen as an innovative way of exploring different design methods whilst maintaining the standards being achieved in the dissertations which are pursued in parallel.

10.4 The Centre's strengths include:

- a highly committed and supportive staff team
- an intimate atmosphere;
- substantial engagement with the City of Liverpool, as evidenced in particular by the former "City Works" and the new "Culture Works" programmes;
- the great student loyalty as evidenced by the high proportion of the Centre's Part One graduates who return to take Part Two;
- the involvement of ARUPs (a leading design consultancy) in the delivery of much technology teaching;

- the integration of live applied research projects with the curriculum as evidenced by the "Reanimating the Waterfront" project;
- The Centre's commitment to access initiatives demonstrated by admitting and supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

10.4 The Visiting Board has made the following recommendations. The RIBA will expect 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.

10.4.1 The Board recommends that the University, following the resignation of the current Head of Centre and the appointment to the post of the current leader for technology teaching, should ensue that a "design champion" for the Centre is identified, either through the round of new appointments that are to be made, or through the subsequent academic reorganisation that follows these appointments. The design champion should be tasked with pursuing design excellence and raising standards throughout the Centre.

10.4.2 The Board recommends to the University that the Centre needs to be appropriately resourced, in respect of both staffing and space, to support both the current increased year one cohort as it progresses through the course and any subsequent larger intakes. Without a clear resources strategy in place there is a risk that the delivery of the course may be compromised.

- 10.4.3 The Board recommends that the Centre reviews its internal assessment procedures and its use of its external examiners to ensure that its procedures are fully consistent with the QAA Code of Practice on Assessment and to be absolutely sure that it is not expecting its external examiners to act as second markers. Specifically at Part Two level, the Board recommends that the External Examiners should be sampling all the modules at year five which contribute to the final award.
- 10.4.4 The Board recommends that the Centre reviews the scale, nature and timetabling of the design projects undertaken in the final year of the Part Two to ensure that weaker students have the opportunity to fully develop, refine and critically evaluate their design outcomes and are thus consistently able to demonstrate that all the validation criteria in the area of design are being met. The Centre's commitment to urban design is a strength, but diploma students need to be given the opportunity to develop their architectural design vocabulary across a full range of scales and materials.
- 10.5 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.
- 10.5.1 The Centre might provide its students with greater guidance on the assembly and maintenance of academic portfolios with a view to ensuring that the portfolio is a coherent, complete and well structured assembly of information capable of independent consideration. In particular, emphasis should be placed on developmental materials being retained and incorporated in the portfolios and photographic records of physical models included.
- 10.5.2 The Centre might investigate ways of working together with local practices and the recently relocated RIBA Regional Office to enhance the input from external lecturers and critics and to widen the Centre's exposure to external critical debate.
- 10.5.3 The Centre might review the support it offers its Part One students in their development and application of communication skills. The review should particularly address the achievement of an appropriate balance between computer based approaches to communication and hand drawing and model-making.
- 10.5.4 To further enhance the student experience, the Centre might consider reactivating its Socrates exchange scheme to facilitate home students studying abroad and operating field trips for Diploma students given the strong support for them at undergraduate level.