

Royal Institute of British Architects

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

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 19 March 2008

**Department of Architecture & Spatial
Design
London Metropolitan University**

**BA (Honours) Architecture, Part One
Professional Diploma in Architecture, Part
Two
Examination in Professional Practice:
Architecture, Part Three**

Date of Visiting Board: 25/26 October 2007

Information about the Courses

- 1.1 **BA (Honours) Architecture Part 1**
(3 years FT and 4 years PT)

Professional Diploma in Architecture **Part 2**
(2 years FT and 3 years PT)

The London Metropolitan University Examination in Professional Practice: Architecture Part 3
(1 semester plus summer study period; 60 credits)

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

London Metropolitan University
Department of Architecture and Spatial Design
London Metropolitan University
Spring House
40-44 Holloway Road
London N7 8JL

T: 020 7133 2038

F: 020 7133 2039

W: www.londonmet.ac.uk

- 1.3 **Name of Awarding Body**
London Metropolitan University

- 1.4 **Name of Head of School**
Professor Robert Mull, Head of Department

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

- 2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 25/26 October 2007 were:

Professor Jim Low (Chair)

Professor David Porter (Vice Chair)

Richard Patterson

Rosje Barr

Bill Black

Neil Taylor

Claire Wright (Regional Nominee)

Sharon Wright (Non-Architect Member)

Mark Physsas (Graduate/Student Member)

Pamela Edwards (for the RIBA Education Department) was in attendance as Secretary to the Board.

3. Procedures & Criteria for the Visit

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

For more information see www.architecture.com.

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

4.1 The Visiting Board recommends to the RIBA Education Committee **Continued Validation** of:

BA (Honours) Architecture Part 1

(3 years FT and 4 years PT)

Professional Diploma in Architecture Part 2

(2 years FT and 3 years PT)

The London Metropolitan University Examination in

Professional Practice: Architecture Part 3

(1 semester plus summer study period; 60 credits)

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 & the EU Directive

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

5.2 The Visiting Board was satisfied that the Part One 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

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

8. Conditions of Validation

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

9. Standard Requirements of Recognition

RIBA recognition of all courses/qualifications is dependent on:

- i. external examiners being appointed for the course;
- ii. any significant changes to the course 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 The London Metropolitan University Department of Architecture and Spatial Design is a design-led department committed to the promotion of architecture as a relevant and accountable social art, and to providing all students with the practical skills, confidence and bravery to be useful to society as caring citizens and respected professionals.

The Department sits comfortably within the London Metropolitan University commitment to widening access to education and the professions, and to promoting social justice. High numbers of mature students and students from BME backgrounds lead to a rich diversity of student experience and talent that is welcomed by the Department and reflected in the successes of London Metropolitan University ASD students in the annual President's Medals for Architecture.

The financial and timetabling pressures of mature students and those from non-traditional student backgrounds are recognised within a well defined modular course structure that permits the flexible timetabling such diverse student populations require, while maintaining rigorous assessment processes linked to achieving the ARB RIBA Criteria for professional recognition.

10.2 The Department's School's strengths include:

- A good dialogue with – and support and confidence of – senior University management;
- Support, and on-going dialogue with, university QA management teams;

- The Department's Research Units, and the successful integration of research and teaching, reflected in the research skills demonstrated in student projects;
- The ASD projects team, that enables students to learn through live projects, and supports links with practice;
- Good workshop facilities and workshop teams support a high level of material investigation and production in student work;
- The diversity of the student body, and the ability of the department to attract high calibre Part 1 graduates into the Part 2 programme;
- A committed and enthusiastic staff, and staff:student ratios that support a high level of 1:1 teaching and support;
- An established Foundation Course, and good university wide learning support systems, supports a diverse student intake into Part 1 course;
- An inner London location, that supports student recruitment and enables the pool of tutors, and professional and external examiners, to be regularly refreshed.

10.3 Recommendations

10.3.1 There were no specific recommendations attached to the continued validation of the Part 1, Part 2 or Part 3 programmes.

10.4 Advice

10.4.1 There was no formal advice attached to the Visiting Board offers the following advice to the continued validation of the Part 1, Part 2 or Part 3 programmes.

11. Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports

11.1 The last Visiting Board to London Metropolitan University took place on 29/30 May 2003.

The Board found that BA (Hons) Architecture full-time and part-time courses met all the Criteria for Validation at Part One level. Part 1 student portfolios demonstrated a real engagement with issues of design, and impressive communication skills. While the Board was satisfied that lowest pass standards were being set at an appropriate level in all units, there was some evidence of inconsistent marking above this threshold in some units.,

The Board found that the Professional Diploma in Architecture met all the Criteria for Validation at the Part Two level. Part 2 student portfolios demonstrated an impressive commitment to research and a high level of intellectual debate, with the most able students producing work that was both exciting and grounded and clearly focused on the needs of client groups. However, as with Part 1, the Board found some evidence in some units of inconsistent marking over and above the lowest pass threshold standard.

The Board was satisfied the examination papers, case study, personal evaluation and professional experience & development record that made up the Examination in Professional Practice collectively satisfied the Part 3 Criteria. Lowest pass standards were seen as acceptable. The Board supported efforts already underway to refresh the content and broaden contributors to the taught course.

12. Details of Conditions in Item 8.

12.1 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 Critical Self Appraisal is good example of a clearly written, well focused CSA. It conveyed the characteristics of the Department and the key issues it faces during a period of consolidation within the wider University frameworks.

Whilst changes to the Part 3 programme were well documented, ways in which the Department had responded to other issues raised by the previous Visiting Board (such as some inconsistencies in marking; managing formal reporting arrangements for external examiners; and availability of exemplar dissertations to support improvements in written work) were less fully described within the CSA document.

With the 2002 merger of the University of North London and London Guildhall University now consolidated, the department sees itself as benefiting from this process, and gaining an academic and financial independence that allows it to develop, grow and build on its strengths.

Student numbers have grown and, following a challenging peak in 2005/6, are settling to a pattern of planned growth, where increasing student numbers are matched by a corresponding increase in resources.

Within the wider London Metropolitan University structures, the Department enjoys the confidence and support of senior management, and is valued as an effective and trusted contributor to the University's commitment to widening participation and promoting social justice.

An established Foundation Course supports intake into the Part 1 course of mature students and those from under represented student backgrounds. Staff: student ratios are appropriate to widening student participation, and enable the higher level of 1:1 teaching that this requires. Similarly, departmental staff act as Personal Academic Advisers within the Department (performing this role alongside their other teaching, management and research staff responsibilities), and a well developed University Learning Centre provides effective support for a diverse student population generally, and for more vulnerable students in particular..

The financial and timetabling pressures such students experience are acknowledged within a modular course structure for student learning and progression, permitting flexibility in timetabling and study modes, within a framework designed to maintain academic quality and ensure criteria for professional recognition are met.

Creative use made of Departmental resources and expertise is identified as a particular strength from which teaching and learning, and student project work, benefit. This includes an effective integration of the department's research units with teaching and learning; the ASD (live) Projects Office (now operating as an RIBA Chartered Practice); and technical workshops run by staff who are themselves makers within their own fields. Planned 2008 developments in the Department's research units and project office include four new fractional 'Practice Professors' (quarter posts) within the Department's research areas, and partnering between the ASD Projects office and Wordsearch (on the model pioneered in 2006) to set up and run the 2008 Student Biennale.

In the Department's RAE submission design is highlighted as evidence of research, focusing on the work of the Architecture Research Unit.

In general, the Department is confident in its identity and achievements in the promotion of architecture, and in its ambition to provide all students with the skills and qualities they will need as caring citizens and respected professionals.

The successes of LMU students in the RIBA President's Medals for Architecture support growing student recruitment, and competitive entry into the Part 2 course attracts a wide range of able students.

However, within the context of a generally confident Department of architecture, pressures of top up fees, and anxieties about future constraints on student funding, are a negative factor, and identified as possible threats to continued planned developments in widening participation. Similarly, there are concerns about the negative impact of fluctuations in the economy and industry on the ASD (live) projects office, and developments in work-based learning currently being piloted with the University of Westminster.

In addition to these concerns, space has become an issue. It is now recognised that the Department has outgrown its current location in Spring House and a planned move is scheduled for 2012, as part of a wider university expansion. Until then resourceful timetabling of studios, lectures and seminars makes positive use of existing space.

13.2 **Documentation and arrangements for the visit**

The Board thanks the staff and students of the Department for their kind hospitality during the visit.

The arrangements for the visit were excellent and the course documentation extremely and well organised. QA Module Boxes were available alongside the portfolio displays, which were extensive. A succinct exhibition was displayed in the Board's base room, which the Department had taken the opportunity to establish as a new permanent small exhibition space for the school.

The head of school, staff and students and external examiners engaged enthusiastically and helpfully with the validation process, and provided additional clarification of work and procedures when this was requested. The Board also noted the exemplary and highly professional contribution of the University Visiting Board Facilitator in supporting the Visiting Board process.

13.2.1 *Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit*

The Board considered the following portfolios from the 2006/7 graduating cohorts:

BA(Hons) Architecture (Part 1)

1st year 1 lowest; 1 middle ; 2 higher portfolios from a cohort of 120.

2nd year 2 lowest; 2 middle; 1 higher portfolios from a cohort of 94.

3rd year 3 low; 3 middle ; and 3 higher portfolios from a cohort of 77.

Professional Diploma in Architecture (Part 2)

The Board reviewed the following portfolios from the range of work displayed across the Part 2 level course units: 6 lowest ; 2 middle; 4 highest from a cohort of 102.

Examination in Practice and Management (Part 3)

Sample of examination portfolios from the 2006/7

Examination: 2 lowest; 1 middle; 2 high passes from a cohort of 29.

13.3 **Responses made to the previous Visiting Board report and external examiner recommendations:**

A new three tier assessment process has been introduced in response to the previous Board's recommendation to strengthen objectivity in agreeing final marks for design projects and address some limited inconsistencies in marking between some studios and units.

Examples of previous dissertations are now readily available for students to review as exemplars of good academic practice, to support the development of student research, and encourage high standards in written work.

The Part Three programme has now been revised and brought into University Post Graduate QA frameworks, with an updated Part 3 examination syllabus and a broader range of contributors to the taught course. Additional staff resource has been allocated to this area of teaching and learning, which is further supported by exemplary External Examiner feedback.

External examiner reporting is now integrated into university QA systems, with regular dialogue between University QA team and the Department.

13.4 **Context of the courses within the wider provision of the Department and Faculty**

The Department benefits from its location in a large metropolitan university, where students can make relationships with those in other faculties, and have good access to facilities

across the London Metropolitan University Campus, including a range of libraries, and the kiln at the Sir John Cass College.

The department enjoys full support from the university, is fully in line with University policies and mission on widening participation. There is a mature dialogue between the Department and the University, with the Department soon being trusted to manage an exemplary QA system, with the benefits of early warning on problems of student progression.

Within the Department, a well established Foundation Course assists entry to the Part 1 course by those from non-traditional student backgrounds. Specialist masters courses linked to the content of Diploma /MA units strengthen the Part 1 and Part 2 validated programmes, and the work of the Department's established research units in Design Research, Low Energy Architecture and History & Theory are integrated into all aspects of teaching & learning.

13.5 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part One qualification

13.5.1 Aims Objectives and Content of Part One Course

The aims and objectives of the course are delivered through a clearly defined semester based modular system that has been mapped against ARB RIBA Criteria for Part 1, and is delivered through a unit system.

13.5.2 The BA (Hons) Architecture course is well designed to meet the learning needs of a wide range of students, and meet the ARB RIBA requirements for professional recognition. It achieves an effective balance between

design and non-design work, and project and non-project based learning.

The first year sets out an exploratory and challenging agenda for students at the beginning of their studies in architecture, and establishes the portfolio as a device through which ideas are explored and articulated, and work is collated for assessment.

The second year is seen as a 'skilling' period comprising 4 design and 4 non-design module. It includes an introduction to Practice management and Law, well placed as an 'employability module' before Honours level academic and design requirements take over in the third year.

Years 2 and 3 are studio based, and involve a collaborative vertical studio, where tuition is managed to meet the different stages and needs of the two year groups. The choice of studios is student led, with most students getting their first or second choice. Students select the studio of their choice, within a framework of guidance from staff to ensure students do not only play to their strengths, but cover the necessary range of studies and learning. Similarly, students are normally required to change studios between 2nd and 3rd year, and any request to remain in the same studio is very carefully reviewed.

In addition to the third year design project, research, developed and realised over two semesters, students write a double module extended dissertation in the final year of the Part 1 level course.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture) were meeting all of the Part One criteria in the area of design.

The Board noted the considerable strengths in the research and development process that was demonstrated in student projects, and in drawn presentations that did not strive to be fashionable, but reflected the individuality of students.

Whilst design work also demonstrated students' ability to deal with conventional design resolution in the development of modest buildings, the Board would encourage greater intellectual depth and rigour, similar to that applied in the research and development stage, in the realisation of the design product.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture were meeting all of the Part One criteria in the area of technology and environment.

The Board found real strengths here in the use of consultants and workshop facilities that allow students to develop strong skills in making and understanding materiality. This was well coordinated across all three years and soundly integrated into students' project work.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture were meeting all of the Part One criteria in the area of cultural context.

The input of highly experienced researchers and teachers in the Department's research units are reflected in student achievements in this area of area of the undergraduate programme. Undergraduate design projects show a high level of developing research skills and interests, and sensitivity to cultural and physical context – though, interestingly, little evidence of habitation and use.

In terms of written work, the extended dissertation students undertake in the final year of the undergraduate course was recognised as both ambitious and demanding for the Part 1 level. The Board welcomed the availability of successful dissertations, recommended by at the previous Visit in 2003, to support students' research and writing skills.

The Board also welcomed the move to a more international emphasis in references and resources, that better reflects the Department's diverse student intake and interests.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture were meeting all of the Part One criteria in the area of communication.

A wide range of techniques and a diversity of media result in excellent presentation of work and ideas, although the Department may wish to consider providing students with

improved opportunities to learn and develop their skills in using CAD as a design and communication tool.

Written documents in student portfolios demonstrated both imagination and skill in their presentation. Similarly, the student report accompanying the Department's Critical Self Appraisal was informative and professionally presented. In meetings during the visit students were thoughtful, confident and articulate in their communication.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture were meeting all of the Part One criteria in the area of practice, management and law.

The Board found that management, practice and law, and budgeting and planning issues, were creatively handled and well integrated into the undergraduate programme and into students' design work.

In addition to opportunities to engage with live undergraduate projects through the ASD Projects Office, students are encouraged to learn from managing their own studies and projects, and to relate these skills to management skills required in practice, and to their own professional development. During the third year students undertake an integrated design audit that takes in contextual issues, such as planning law.

Preparation for Professional Experience

This provides an excellent preparation for Stage 1 of Professional Experience & Development between the Part 1 and Part 2 stages. It also equips students with

employable skills they can draw on to sustain their Part 2 studies with part time work in practice.

13.5.4 Assessment:

Since the previous Board in 2003, the Department has introduced triple marking to address some concerns about lack of parity between some studios in the assessment of student projects and portfolios. The Board supports the Department's efforts in developing and maintaining this system, and the benefits it brings, in terms of improved confidence and transparency in assessing student work. Assessment is further supported by the use of written feedback sheets during the development of projects.

13.5.5 Progression

Given the complexity of the flexible modular programme, and some movement of students between F/T and P/T modes, student progression and completion rates need to be carefully monitored.

The Board noted the accessibility of staff, and the systems in place to support individual student progression, and identify where vulnerable students may need additional support. These included linking students to Personal Academic Advisers (PAAs) and acting as advocate between students and the university.

Good use is also made of the University Learning Development Unit to support student progression.

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

The Board commends the Department's admission arrangements, designed to open programmes to as many

students as possible, in line with the University's widening participation mission, providing they have the ability to benefit and reasonable expectation of achieving an award. All selected candidates are interviewed with portfolio, and clear information is provided about the content and submission of portfolios, and on minimum entry requirements within a broad range of admission routes.

A diverse entry to the Part 1 level is further supported by a well established one year Foundation Course, and introduction to university learning support services during their induction to the programme.

In a programme that admits a large proportion of mature students with previous academic studies and professional experience, APL and APEL the application of criteria appears to be well documented and clearly applied.

13.6 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Two qualification

13.6.1 Clarity, validity and Achievement of Course Objectives

The course objectives were clearly articulated in course documentation and were demonstrably being achieved.

13.6.2 Course Design and Content

The course design and content is clear and appropriate to the students participating in the course. It makes creative use of departmental and university resources, and benefits in particular, from links to masters programmes and research.

ARB RIBA Criteria are met across the two years of the programme. In year 4 there is an opportunity to undertake

studies linked to specialist masters programmes and to go on to complete a Masters level qualification before undertaking the 5th year to achieve the Part 2 qualification.

In the 5th year, learning is centred on a year long design thesis, and includes working with technical consultants in the studio. Cultural context is similarly learned and demonstrated through events within the design studio, through reviews and crits and the reports that students write in connection with their design thesis.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all of the Part Two criteria in the area of Design.

At the Part 2 level students join design units that offer a good range of stimulating briefs, with opportunities to explore individual interests and to develop a grounding in specialist knowledge and skills. Urbanism is an important constant in design projects at this level and linked masters programmes provide opportunities to develop and consolidate these at masters level study.

Progression, range, focus and parity are supported by cross over events and formative assessment throughout the year that involve all units.

The Board welcomed the debate within the Department that encourages Part 2 level students to determine the individual ambition of their work, while meeting Part 2 design criteria and achieving the necessary balance of process and

realisation in their projects. With stronger students this results in impressive and exemplary work, as evidenced by recent successes in the annual RIBA President's Medals for Architecture awards. In some cases however, design resolution and execution does not match the level and quality of the research and development project phase.

As with Part 1, the Board would encourage the Department to find ways to support the full range of students in achieving a similar intellectual depth and rigour in design realisation to that evidenced in their research and development work.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all of the Part Two criteria in the area of technology and environment.

The Board welcomed the opportunities in 4th year modules for students to build prototypes and engage in advocacy on 'practice beyond aesthetics', that supported the good understanding of materiality, and to respond to the demands of real world locations, that is evident in Part 2 level project work.

In the 5th year, technical studies and learning are integrated into student projects, as students work with a technical coordinator and technical design consultants on the development and realisation of their individual major design thesis project.

The Board noted the Integrated Design Study Diary that all students keep at this stage as excellent practice for reflecting on and demonstrating the development and integration of technology and materiality in project work.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all of the Part Two criteria in the area of cultural context.

Students benefit from the application of the Department's specialist research units, and other more recently developed specialist masters programmes, to their Part 2 level work.

There are opportunities for students to continue specialist interests developed in the 4th year into masters study and qualification *before* continuing on to complete the 5th year of the Part 2 stage. The Board noted the enrichment this brought to students' 5th year design thesis projects, and also the discipline that is required to refocus on covering the full range of Part 2 criteria.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all of the criteria in the area of communication. Part 2 level students demonstrated mature communication skills, involving a range of media. Drawn work was sometimes modest in presentation and stood as evidence that – in a Department where many students experience particular financial – students are not obliged to use expensive presentation materials and resources to succeed. However, the Board also approved the support that students receive when they demonstrate ambition in the presentation of their work – as seen in some of the portfolios reviewed and in the Department's recent successes in the RIBA President's Medals for Architecture.

As with Part 1, the use of CAD skills was noted as an area for possible further development.

During the student meeting with the Board Part 2 level students emerged as listening, thoughtful and lively minded communicators.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the portfolios sampled, the Board confirmed that graduates of the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all of the Part Two criteria in the area of management, practice and law.

The Board found Management, Practice and Law teaching and learning was both sound and imaginatively delivered at the Part 2 level. The 'Advocacy: Practice Beyond Aesthetics' module encourages students to take a position and become knowledgeable about the planning process, and the relationship between representation and project requirements. They noted its value in relation to Part 2 student project work, and the excellent base it provides for developing professional skills and judgement that make students both employable and able to develop in practice.

13.6.4 **Assessment:**

Assessment methods are well structured and appropriate. Design studies are assessed in portfolio at all levels, that include sketchbooks, diaries and records of research. The 'Illustrated Document' forms the basis for presentation and assessment of subject studies modules. At A3 format these enable the student to develop their skills at integrating their skills in research, analysis, interpretation and writing with the graphic coherence necessary as a designer.

A three tier marking system supports transparency in assessment and parity between units. Weightings are appropriate and staff clearly engage with the external examiners. At Part 2 module level the pass/fail threshold is 50%

13.6.5 **Progression**

Many students work in practice during this stage of the programme, which puts progression in their studies under pressure and gives rise to deferrals and switching between f/t and p/t modes. Together with the robust systems for tracking student progression - as displayed in student progression records available to the Board in QA module boxes along side the portfolios - good staff: student ratios and the open door policy help give early warning of students in difficulties.

The Department is currently participating in a pilot study in collaboration with the University of Westminster, to explore the viability of introducing work-based learning systems into the architecture programme, which could be of particular relevance to the Departments students

13.6.6 **Admission**

The Board noted that entry to the Professional Diploma in Architecture (Part 2) is competitive and requires a first or second class Honours degree in architecture, and that the course attracts students with a high degree of critical enquiry and well developed design skills.

13.7. Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Three qualification

13.7.1 Quality and coverage of the syllabus

Since the visit in 2003 the Examination in Professional Practice in Architecture course revised, updated and restructured within the University post graduate QA systems.

A 60 credit Masters Level module has been developed comprising professional experience; professional self-appraisal; case study and written examination. The programme is now delivered by two members of staff and has been extended to include a period of self study over the summer period before the written examination and professional interviews take place.

13.7.2 Assessment:

Examination arrangements have been similarly reviewed in line with recommendations from the Part 3 external examiner, with the examination now offered only once a year. The Board supports the continuing attention being given to further strengthen parity and equality of opportunity in the (always difficult to manage) timetabling arrangements for the professional interview.

The Board found the new arrangements to be robust and appropriate to teaching and learning and assessment at this professional level, and commended the Department, staff and external examiners involved in this work.

13.8. External examining arrangements

The Board met with external examiners appointed at the Part 1, 2 and 3 stages of the programme.

The External examiners expressed confidence in their role and in the arrangements the Department made for them to sample student work and review teaching and learning and assessment. They expressed confidence that marking levels are on target and that the ARB RIBA Criteria are being met. They noted the staff commitment to student learning and to parity in assessment.

The External Examiners were aware of the context of teaching and learning and assessment and of the diversity of students, and recognised their commitment and strengths in understanding the context of architecture and client needs. They considered that the commitment to process and participation in design is a real strength of the Department, and is preparing students for a changing profession.

There appears to be an excellent rapport between the Department and the External Examiners. The Board would support continued review of the choice of External Examiners to achieve the balance of understanding of the Department and its aims and objectivity and constructive criticism. The Board noted the Part 3 external examiner arrangements, in terms of reporting and supporting staff in implementing recommendations, was exemplary.

13.9 Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience

The Board found that Management Practice and Law teaching and learning during the Part 1 and Part 2 level programmes was well structured and enabled students to develop a good level of employable skills, and an enquiring approach and good judgement to support their development in practice. Arrangements for monitoring professional experience are similarly well structured and well supported.

The RIBA Professional Experience & Development Record is the primary for recording and monitoring framework, supported by good use of e-tutoring.

13.10 Students

The Board met with students from the Part 1 and Part 2 courses, and with students working during their professional experience employment, at a well attended meeting. The also received a well considered and well presented student report alongside the School's Critical Self Appraisal. The Board noted that students:

- were interested and positive in their approach;
- were taking a positive interest in the processes of the Board;
- were valued by staff for their commitment;
- were articulate and mature in their communication and approach;
- were benefiting from a mature relationship with Departmental staff;
- were supportive of the Department and university;
- were supportive of their education and the opportunities it gave.

13.11 Staff

The Board noted the strong and open management structure that, from the Head of Department down, sets a positive staff ethos of engagement with the Department, their peers and with students. They found the staff to be well motivated, enthusiastic, committed and hardworking. In their discussions with the Board they expressed confidence in their roles and in the work of the Department.

The Board found staff to be committed to the Department's long tradition of delivering flexible full-time and part-time architectural education. The staff: student ratios are appropriate to the Departments commitment to widening participation. The slightly higher ratio at the Part 2 stage is explained on the basis of the greater complexity of teaching and learning at this level, and the additional learning development and support frameworks that are available within the university for Part 1 level students.

Staff are committed to excellence in research, academic studies and design and to the Department's pluralist ethos that supports individuality.

Staff recognised the complexity of student profiles and study modes required strong QA and student tracking systems, and accepted the workload that this involved. They explained the systems now in place to ensure transparency in assessment and parity between studios and units with knowledge, understanding and commitment.

13.12. Research

The Department's well-established, respected and thriving research units are able to attract interesting and creative work which is fed into student learning at Part 1 and Part 2.

13.13. Equal Opportunities

The Department is a partner in the University's exemplary policies and commitment to social justice through widening student participation. It benefits from established University systems to manage academic quality within this context and to support the learning and development of a diverse student body. In architecture, this is further supported by a Foundation Course that supports admission of mature

students from a range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

The Board found that the Department promotes openness and inclusion within its own organisation, within the curriculum and within teaching and learning methodologies, within the context of established staff and examiner teams and opportunities for new appointments. It would support the school in extending this approach through appointments of able and creative full-time and part-time staff at all levels, and in the involvement of visiting lecturers, that reflect the diversity of the student body.

13.14 Resourcing and facilities

- *Studios*
The Board found that the Department is making good use of the limited, and now somewhat cramped space, in their present building. There are plans to expand/relocate to create more studio space, but until then resourceful timetabling makes good use of existing studio space and supports lively and productive studio activity.
- *IT*
The Department's computer systems and facilities appeared good and well supported, with students able to download course materials and module summaries – though not onto their own laptops if they bring them into the building, which gives rise to frustrations about transferring material from home computers to print in the school.

- *Library*
The Library provided good working facilities and was well resourced. Staffed appeared knowledgeable and helpful, and a good induction system was in place for new users. It contained a good range of books and journals.

- *Workshops*
The Departmental workshop facilities were excellent and open for a good range of daytime and evening hours. The staff were enthusiastic and helpful and were all makers within the fields of their expertise. They appeared to be well used, with staff encouraging peer learning and working in those areas where health and safety permitted.

- *Printing*
The Board noted student concerns that the costs of printing in the university are very high, and suggest that the Department request this be reviewed.

14. Attachments

Prior to the Visit the School provided:
Critical Self-Appraisal
Questionnaire
Supplementary Information as outlined in the RIBA
Validation Procedures

In the Base Room the School provided the following
BA (Hons) Architecture Course Handbooks 2003-2008
Professional Diploma in Architecture Course Handbooks
2005-2008
Examination in Professional Practice in Architecture
Handbook 2006-7
Undergraduate Prospectuses 2004-2009
Postgraduate Prospectuses 2003-2008

Student handbooks 2003-2008
Academic Regulations 2003-2008
University Assessment Framework
Online Mark Entry Training Manual 2006-7
Information for Personal Academic Advisors 2005-6
Assessment Handbooks 2002-2004
Guide to Assessment Processes October 2004, May 2006 & June 2007
Undergraduate Scheme Document
Graduate School Self-Evaluation Document Volumes 1 and 2
Self-Study document
Committee members handbooks
Research information including committee minutes
Assessments Information 2006-2007 including subject standards
board minutes and module marksheets for all validated
programmes
Staff Development and Support information
Department Structure and Committee information
Student feedback
Strategy documents
Student support information
Taught provision manual
Staffing matrix and CVS
QAA Self-evaluation document
Quality Assurance
Timetables
Websites