

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to Northumbria University**

Confirmed by the RIBA Education Committee 6 July 2009

School of the Built Environment

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One

**Professional Diploma in Architecture
(candidate course for Part Two)**

Date of visiting board: 20/21 November 2008

1. Information about the courses

1.1 **Course offered for revalidation:
BA (Hons) Architecture (part 1)**
3 years full time

**Course offered for initial validation:
Professional Diploma in Architecture
(candidate course for part 2)**
2 years full time/3 years part time

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

School of the Built Environment
Northumbria University
Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST

T: 0191 227 4722

Fax 0191 227 3167

www.northumbria.ac.uk

1.2 **Name of awarding body**
Northumbria University

1.3 **Name of Head of School**
Stephen Hodgson (Dean)

1.4 **Name of Director of Architecture**
Peter Beacock

2. Membership of the visiting board

2.1 The members of the RIBA visiting board for the visit on 20 and 21 November 2008 were:

Dr Robert Felix (chair)
Andrew Bourne (vice-chair)
Jonathan Bone (regional representative)
Peter Culley (academic/practitioner)
Elantha Evans (academic/practitioner)
Stephen Melville (co-professional)
Roxanne Walters (student representative)

David Gloster (RIBA Director of Education) was in attendance as secretary to the board.

3. Procedures and 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, and effective from September 2003. For more information see www.architecture.com.

4. Recommendations of the visiting board

4.1 At its meeting on 6 July 2009 RIBA Education Committee confirmed **continued validation** of the:

BA (Hons) Architecture (part 1)
3 years full time.

4.2 The next full visiting board for this course will take place in 2012.

4.3 At its meeting on 6 July 2009 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed **continuing candidate course status** of the:

Professional Diploma in Architecture (part 2)
two years full time, three years part time

4.4 The visiting board was unable to recommend initial validation for the Professional Diploma; the revisiting board for this course will take place in 2009.

5. Recommendation of the visiting board to the Construction Industry Council and ARB

5.1 The visiting board recommends to the Construction Industry Council that the part 1 course met the Common Learning Outcomes for Degree Courses in the Built Environment.

5.2 The visiting board recommends to the ARB that the part 1 course met all points of the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC.

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 part 1 course and examinations listed in 4.1 above satisfied all the criteria for validation 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 course listed in 4.1 was inspected during the visit and found to meet the required standards.

8. Conditions of validation

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

9. Standard requirements of recognition

9.1 RIBA recognition of all courses/qualifications is dependent upon:

- i. external examiners being appointed for the course;
- ii. any significant changes to the courses and examinations being submitted to the RIBA;
- iii. any change of award title, and the effective date of the change, being reported to the RIBA so that, where appropriate, recognition may formally be transferred to the new title by the RIBA;
- iv. submission to the RIBA of the names of students passing the courses/qualifications listed in 4.

10. Summary of the recommendations, advice, and commentary contained in the full report

10.1 The BA (Hons) Architecture course at Northumbria University has been established in response to a perceived need for graduates to actively engage with the values of practice and the workplace. The course accepted its first cohort of students in 1997, when it also received candidate course status; this status was extended on the recommendation of the 2002 visiting board.

10.2 The course can be commended for:

- excellent physical resources in the form of dedicated architecture studios and IT provision
- a good architecture collection in the City Campus University Library
- its location within a large School of the Built Environment, giving access to a range of resources, and a pool of experienced staff across a range of disciplines complementing the architecture provision
- securing a clear commitment from senior university management to develop architecture both as part of

<p>the university's vision for its future academic provision, and a key component of the School of the Built Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the active participation of local practitioners, and the utilisation of the school's location in an area of development and urban regeneration • developing students' ability to produce lucid architectural presentations 	
<p>10.3 Recommendations The visiting board has made the following recommendations, and expects the university to report on action taken or planned as a result of these within the timescale stipulated in this report. Failure by the university to act on recommendations may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.</p>	<p>10.4 Advice The visiting board offers the following advice to the course team on desirable improvements, which are felt will assist course development, and raise standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider how to redress the balance between those processes geared to meeting the criteria and making a final presentation, and the need for evidence of critical thinking in the design process, particularly at the award level • consider mechanisms which significantly relax the current system of evaluating students' progress, such that a greater range of design solutions and a more pluralistic design culture may emerge • consider how students evidence understanding of the debates in architecture that underpin final design schemes, particularly at the award level
<p>10.3.1 The board recommends that the school submit a detailed plan for the implementation of a revised course structure, acknowledging the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an increased level of history and theory provision, including clearly defined vehicles for the assessment of these curricular areas • the integration and evidencing of these subjects within students' design process and final design projects, particularly at the award level • a remapping of course modules against the validation criteria, giving particular consideration to those modules which can be compensated by using the overall average as part of the assessment of a failed component 	<p>10.5 The Professional Diploma in Architecture course at Northumbria University has been developed to build on the growing reputation of the first degree course. The course accepted its first cohort of students in 2006, and received candidate course status following an exploratory board in March 2007. The first cohort of seven students graduated in June 2008; the board was shown examples of work both from this group, and the current cohort.</p> <p>10.6 The board was unable to grant initial validation. The concerns centred on providing evidence that the criteria relating to Design and Cultural Context were being fully met, and integrated into major project work.</p>
<p>This plan is to be submitted to the RIBA New Courses and Course Changes Group within six months from the date of this visiting board.</p>	<p>10.7 Recommendations The visiting board has made the following recommendations, and expects the university to report on</p>

action taken or planned as a result of these prior to the revisit in late 2009. Failure by the university to act on recommendations may result in candidate course status being withdrawn by a future visiting board.

- 10.8.1 The board recommends that the school develop a revised course structure and delivery for the Professional Diploma in Architecture, acknowledging the following points:
- that there is a necessity to offer a course challenging students at a different intellectual level than the first degree
 - that a broader range of design projects is offered to develop students' conceptual, analytical, and practical skills in support of a more pluralistic design culture
 - that a key skill in the workplace is the ability to structure and present extended written arguments, and that a suitable vehicle be offered for this, particularly at the award level
 - that, both in the design process and in their written submissions, students provide evidence of critical engagement with the contemporary cultures of architecture, urban design, and the fine arts, particularly at the award level
 - that, following consideration of the course structure and delivery, a remapping of course modules against the validation criteria is undertaken

11. Summary of previous visiting board reports

- 11.1 The 2004 RIBA visiting board to Northumbria University recommended that, further to concerns expressed by the RIBA in 2002 regarding the provision of Design and Cultural Context, the school identify and appoint a new staff member who would lead in defining the design agenda for the subject group. Projects should reflect the

cultural framework in which design proposals were situated, encourage students' critical engagement with the contemporary cultural influences of architecture, and integrate this understanding with design outputs. The board regarded this as a key factor in meeting aspirations for a validated part 2 programme; the mid term monitoring visit of 2006 acknowledged that the institution had responded appropriately to the recommendation regarding the appointment of a 'design champion'.

- 11.2 The 2004 board also considered that the school should formalise existing arrangements for independent moderation of design marks, and review assessment arrangements to ensure that these relate strictly to learning outcomes and criteria.

12. Details of the condition in item 8

- 12.1 There were no conditions attached to the course listed in 4.1.

13. Commentary

- 13.1 The board would like to thank the school, and its staff and students for their hospitality during the visit. The board particularly wishes to thank the school facilitator for her exceptional assistance throughout the visit.

13.2 Critical review

The board considered that the subject group's critical review of 4 October 2008 provided a concise view of achievements to date and plans for the future, but did not define a distinctive academic character to the courses offered. In view of the board's remit to consider initial validation for the candidate course for part 2, there was a particular need in the review to define the intellectual

agenda for that course, clearly distinguishing it from the first degree.

The regional identity referred in the review could usefully be extended to a description of how design and cultural issues specific to the school's location are situated within histories and theories of architecture, and how these inform students' appreciation of the general discourse of ideas about architecture. Although design pedagogy receives some emphasis in the review document, it was unclear how this will be reflected in the curriculum, and the manner in which students develop critical thinking across a number of important aspects of the curriculum.

The mapping of criteria against academic modules was felt to be unclear in places, and repetitive in others. The board did not consider this document helpful to their consideration of the course prior to the visit, or contribute to an understanding of some of the work displayed during the visit.

Responses to external examiner comments had been dealt with by the architecture staff commendably promptly, and in some detail, suggesting a developing dialogue. In terms of commentary reflecting some of the board's concerns, it was noted that one external examiner report had identified a lack of documentation of design process, and the consideration of alternative approaches to design solutions.

Finally the board had some concerns about an implicit emphasis in the review on training, rather than academic education. Whilst this was supportable in the context of an aspiration to engage with 'the world of work' (in the Dean's words), the recognition of architecture as a cultural subject with a speculative and experimental dimension

13.3 could have been better reflected in proposals for programme development, particularly at part 2. The Vice-Chancellor expressed clear and unequivocal support for architecture at Northumbria. The three priorities of research, working with the regional community, and increasing brand awareness and visibility of the university were considered by the board to resonate well with the aspirations of the architecture staff.

A comprehensive programme of staff appointments had received an exceptional response; recruitment was set to continue throughout the next three years. The V-C emphasised that whilst 'discipline strength...and the vocational course' were important qualities to maintain, there were also potential synergies on the campus between architecture and the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

13.4 The meeting with the Dean of School and Director of Architecture restated the vocational and workbased ethos both of the university, and courses in architecture. The Dean acknowledged that the growth of the School of Built Environment now needed to be matched by stabilising numbers in architecture, consolidating all related BE disciplines in one building, and recruiting more staff to reflect the success of the courses on offer. The physical dispersal of disciplines around the campus had mitigated against some collaborative working, although it was hoped to redress this in the future.

It was explained that the part 2 programme had, been developed in response to interest expressed by local practices, who were keen that the school build on the success of the part 1 programme. The relationship between students and the workplace was considered very important, with the teaching programme structured to

allow part time and full time students to share the same teaching modules.

14. Arrangements for the visit

14.1 With the exception of the board’s reservations regarding the mapping document, other documents provided before the visit were clear and comprehensive.

14.2 The board was informed that the students’ work was divided between their ‘academic’ portfolios, and ‘design’ portfolios. This was considered an unhelpful distinction, and appeared to contradict both the RIBA’s stipulation that the academic folio contain *all* the work a student undertakes during a year, and the generally accepted view that design is, critically, an academic activity integrating many practical and theoretical skills.

The division of the folios did not assist the board in an holistic view of students’ performance, and complicated the appreciation of whether students had an overview of relationships between different curricular areas.

14.3 The exhibition of students’ work was clearly set out, although a minority of the presentations were not identified by name.

14.4 The base room the board was provided with did not offer sufficient physical space for easily inspecting portfolios from both courses; the presentation of some students’ design work on unwieldy polyboard backings was not ideal for the comparison and contrast of achievement or content.

However, the school facilitator quickly made excellent alternative arrangements for viewing the part 2 portfolios

in the adjacent display space, which the board greatly appreciated.

15. Commentary on the course leading to part 1

15.1 The board confirmed that the course content and objectives are valid for a BA (Hons) Architecture degree. Comprehensive presentations on the studio exhibition were given to clarify aspects of the course content.

The BA1 course provided some challenging material for students, and was led with conviction and commitment by a newly appointed staff member; well considered (and heavily subsidised) field trips were a commendable addition and complement to design activities. Although the course was described by the Director of Programmes in terms of its congruence with level 1 programmes in other schools, the board considered that the academic content should develop even further breadth and conjecture to expose students to the full range of possibilities implicit in the study of architecture.

Projects at BA2 level were described as developing and setting limits. Staff expressed some concerns that students wanted to omit design process. This included critical phases of contextual analysis, the situating of a concept in relation to the work and ideas of others, and reviewing alternative formal and constructional design strategies. Instead, students were sometimes inclined to engage with building design prematurely. The board considered it would be helpful if the course structure was amended to allow a more reflective, first principles approach to design. A greater degree of speculation embedded in project briefs would allow students to perceive architecture in terms of possibilities, rather than orthodoxies.

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- The explanation of the BA3 level stated that reference to precedents in the preliminary stage of projects was now being discouraged because it was seen as an inhibition to students' design work. Projects placed stress on the idea of an autonomous architecture, both in a physical sense, and in relation to building services systems. The use of landscape as a context for design projects was appropriate, with some projects evidencing a distinctively romantic ambience, complemented by the choice of intermediate technology, natural materials, and in the best work, exceptionally skilled drawing. There was however little data qualifying the methods for choosing the location of architecture, or a consideration of the historic relationships between land and built form.
- 15.2 Quality and coverage of the syllabus
On the basis of the evidence provided, the board confirmed that all graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture were meeting all the validation criteria.
- 15.3 Design
Although not exclusively related to design, the comments in 15.1 provide further detail.
- 15.4 Technology and Environment
Students evidenced good grounding in basic construction techniques, and a sympathetic understanding of the principles of intelligent waste and energy management systems. The board considered that although qualities of light were fundamental to the atmosphere of the best schemes, there could usefully be more evidence of how this was achieved both by use of materials and the lighting design itself.
- 15.5 Cultural Context
- 15.6 Communication
Students had developed good conventional skills in representation using 2- and 3D drawing software, and made extensive use of rendering programmes. Design presentations were comprehensive, with good description of interior spaces in the best work. The board considered however that, whilst presentation skills were strong, and would have a particular resonance with practice, there was relatively little of the experimentation in approach important to a first degree programme. Writing skills would also benefit from a broader range of approaches, as this is fundamental to supporting research work at second degree level. Finally, some submissions required greater technical attention to referencing and footnoting, as well as the situating of ideas in the broader cultural context of architecture.
- 15.7 Management, Practice, and Law
The development of the course from its roots in Architectural Design and Management benefited submissions in this curricular area. Students submitted short essays on a range of practice related issues; the work

was generally good, and the assessment vehicles suitable for the subject.

Preparation for work in practice was considered sound. The school enjoys close links with local practitioners, both as guest critics and future employers of graduates. Students were considered very employable.

15.8 Progression

Progression statistics for the BA (Hons) were good, with the majority of fail/repeats occurring in the second year of the course, in line with national trends. Progression and achievement in the award year was also good, with over 60% of students awarded a 2.1 or better.

15.9 Assessment

The board expressed concern that students could fail a module component yet still pass overall by an averaging of marks; understanding of a critical element of the curriculum could thus be circumvented. This was not considered ideal practice; it was suggested that local regulations for the BA (Hons) Architecture be developed to avoid this eventuality in the future, and provide a more robust approach to the assessment of individual components.

Although the use of progress sheets provided a useful means of navigation through the course for weaker students, the board had concerns about whether subdividing elements of learning inadvertently reduced understanding of the integration of one curricular area with another. The board also considered that the use of an assessment system and learning outcomes very closely aligned with the validation criteria had the potential to proscribe results, and inhibit experimentation.

15.10 Admissions and arrangements for direct entry

It was explained that all suitable applicants to the course were interviewed. There were arrangements in place allowing direct entry to levels above the incoming year, although few students entered the course on this basis.

15.11 External examining arrangements

External examiners are nominated by the school, and approved by the University Learning and Teaching Committee. There are two examiners for the BA (Hons) Architecture course, an academic and a practitioner.

External examiners comment on all aspects of course they feel appropriate. The university's annual external examiners' conference acts as a training event for newly appointed externals, and gives examiners an opportunity to discuss programme issues with staff.

It was explained to the board that the externals first viewed the 'design folio', and then the 'academic folio'; only 50% of award level students were interviewed, in 40 minute sessions for undergraduate, and 45 minutes for postgraduate.

The board met with a current and outgoing examiner. It was considered that the essential character of the previous Architectural Design and Management course had been effectively maintained in the newly titled course, with improving standards in academic writing, welcome developments in the use of digital programmes, and the emergence of an agenda for what was described as 'urbanistic sustainability'.

External examiners' reports were very supportive of the course.

16. Commentary on the course leading to part 2

16.1 The board considered that the course content and objectives were not yet valid for the Professional Diploma in Architecture (RIBA part 2) to be given initial validation.

16.2 Quality and coverage of the syllabus
On the basis of the evidence provided, the board could not confirm that all graduates from the Professional Diploma in Architecture were meeting all the validation criteria. As with the BA (Hons) course, the board expressed reservations that the use of an assessment system and learning outcomes very closely aligned with the validation criteria had the potential to proscribe results, and inhibit experimentation.

16.3 Design
The board had concerns that the lowest pass students did not show satisfactory evidence of the integration of design, technology, and cultural context in their work. The technique of synoptic presentation suggested that drawings may have been edited, and little evidence either of thorough site analysis or design process; the 6 board format adopted by the majority of students was considered to have contributed to an homogenisation of the work, leaving little room for critical thinking and too great an emphasis on stylistic presentation.

The use of local sites reflecting the industrial heritage of the north east was commendable. Design ideas were not, however, explored as an iterative process, and although *locus* had been repeatedly stressed by staff as an influence on formal and spatial decision, presentations placed

relatively little emphasis on this – except in the visual placing of the final building in context.

There were further concerns that one high marked project, probably inadvertently, may not have properly acknowledged a key source of its imagery and organisation. Whilst it is acknowledged that originality of authorship can sometimes be difficult to establish, this is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed.

The board also considered that the briefs developed by students at the award level were not especially ambitious. Projects occasionally had a tendency to the generic; there was a need to demonstrate that students had found both the intellectual and formal skills to differentiate postgraduate study from their first degree in ways other than a scaling up of enclosed space..

16.4 Technology and Environment
Students provided clear 2- and 3D drawings indicating approaches to construction technology, and supported these with written reports on building services systems. Whilst both of these approaches were sound, evidence of a more speculative consideration of contemporary structural and material systems, appropriate in ambition to a part 2 course, would have been welcome.

16.5 Cultural Context
The absence of an extended written submission reflecting issues relating both to the contemporary built environment and histories and theories of architecture, was considered by the board to be a potentially important omission. Although the course team considered other assessment vehicles provided evidence of students' critical

thinking, the board considered there was a need for work that explicitly engaged with this criterion.

Such a study could then inform the design process in a more intimate way, with evidence of ideas in architecture explored in relation to theories and methods of design, and the overall historical development of the discipline.

16.6 Communication

As with the BA (Hons) Architecture, students had developed good conventional 2- and 3D skills in representation using drawing software, and were skilled with rendering programmes, albeit using these in a more restrained manner than their colleagues on the first degree. Design presentations were similarly comprehensive, and some schemes successfully combined digital and analogue approaches to drawing to create a convincing and atmospheric hybrid.

Writing skills were primarily demonstrated through technical reports supporting design decisions. The board considered that an extended written submission would significantly benefit students' future research skills, and their ability to produce a structured thesis reflecting critical thinking on architecture.

16.7 Management, Practice, and Law

The use of reports qualifying design, constructional, and environmental decisions satisfactorily located studio projects in the context of practice. The topics chosen demonstrated that, in the best work, students had an appreciation of the financial and environmental restraints influencing the major decisions that impact on project development.

17. Students

The student meeting was exceptionally well attended. A very professionally produced student critical self appraisal was made available to the board on the first full day of the visit; all students had contributed comments to this, although it was explained to the board that not everyone present had had the opportunity to read it.

Students were supportive of the course and its staff, and the verbal and written feedback they received on their work. Each tutor was praised for their individual strengths, and there was a clear sense students knew who to identify and approach for particular advice. A variety of responses to enquiries about design process and design ethos was evident, with students reporting that they were required to justify their ideas, and use 3D models to help the design process. Students mentioned that, although a quite formal process, the weekly worksheets provided them with a step by step matrix, ensuring that no critical parts of design development were omitted. The centrality of sustainability to the course ethos was stressed, with students explaining that the issues were not simply appended to the design process. Overall, students stated that the school offered a well rounded approach to teaching, placing design in its broadest context.

Students contributed a number of observations about the character of the part 2 course. Students stated that the transition to the part 2 course had been smooth, and had not presented any academic difficulties. Observations were made that the delivery of the part 2 course was reminiscent of their time in practice, offering the opportunity to apply ideas from the first year of practical training to studio projects. It was considered that there

was an increase in the scale of projects set, and this had meant engaging with urban design issues. The presentation of work at part 2 level was seen as an extension of the student experience at part 1.

When asked about the possibilities for innovation in projects, students were more cautious; it was stated that although design should be challenging, it always needed to be appropriate to context. Students said that, although design briefs were only intended as a guide, they were clearly instructed in what the likely outcomes should be and limits defined as to what might be considered acceptable. This was considered an advantage, as students considered that design needed to respond to specific parameters.

There was some sense of an inherent conservatism among a number of students; design from first principles was not seen as desirable and, when asked how a particularly creative solution might be approached, it was suggested this could be developed by researching products available from overseas manufacturers.

The studios were however seen as a real strength of the course, with very few reservations expressed about hours of access. Students had well designed individual workspaces, with excellent natural light, good security and storage, and ample pinup areas. The sense of a thriving studio culture was evident from all students present.

18. Staff

Staff were enthusiastic and articulate about both courses, and clearly committed to the future evolution of architecture at NU. Course development was seen as consequent on a shared love of subject, and the strong

studio ethos. A constructive dialogue between staff was evident, with all involved contributing to the content of projects.

Principal areas of academic interest were defined as *genius loci*, reflected in a strong interest in context, the teaching of sustainability and the craft of construction. When asked about future academic directions for the course, staff said this happened through everyday conversation. The board were informed that there was an ongoing process of evolution, which involved many meetings about the deployment and review of modules. Staff were confident about the clear and robust QA procedures of the course, and student outputs that reflected a professionally produced, edited, and refined conversation with staff.

Asked to speculate on what character the course might reflect if there were no validation criteria to guide its structure and content, staff suggested NU could become a centre for advanced digital architecture. There was a constant awareness of the need to match outputs with validation criteria, although it was considered that if the criteria were not reflected in students' work, it was arguable if this constituted architecture. Architecture in the school was not considered to either disadvantage top students, or to be an elitist programme addressing only those with the greatest capabilities. Less able students were carefully nurtured. Staff asserted that the thinking underlying course content and delivery was always embedded in building, and it was thus difficult to define the school's outcomes in any other terms

The part 2 course was considered to have been a challenge in its development; when asked by the board about course development, staff admitted that there had not been as

much development work on the diploma as was necessary, and that it was perhaps naive to have assumed the part 2 course would proceed smoothly from the first degree. It was also agreed that the skills of the students coming on to the course had to be a major determinant of the part 2 course design. Staff agreed however that architecture as a course to study was potentially lifechanging in the broadest sense, and that students had made remarkable progress at all levels of the course. Staff emphasised that they applied strict academic standards. It was noted that graduates from the school were routinely given high level responsibilities by employers, who spoke well of teaching skills at the school.

Staff mentioned that they saw some aspects of compliance with the criteria as problematic. However, when asked about component compensation common to the course and university, it was felt that the current system worked. The course teams expressed the view that, irrespective of local academic regulations regarding aggregation of component marks, if a student had passed the module overall, this was acceptable. It was stated that if the team had any concerns over the requirements of an academic module, they would press for its revision.

19. Research

The Vice Chancellor stated that the university was not exposed in its research and that despite being heirs to a practice based tradition a significant amount of research development was planned, including the architecture subject group. This was evident in *The Northumbria Working Papers: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Built and Virtual Environments*, a new publication fielding a range of texts from across the Built Environment disciplines.

Elsewhere, research topics as wide ranging as heritage and

conservation, sustainable cities, and virtual environments were being undertaken with a view to a Masters' level course in architecture ultimately emerging.

Staff in architecture were also active in collaborations on book chapters, the submission of EU funded Tempus proposals, and research into affordable housing and methods of procurement.

Developing staff skills through the teaching certificate scheme was considered important in helping new academics to define their future research areas.

20. Equal Opportunities

The School of the Built Environment complies with Northumbria University's policy on equal opportunities. Most new entrants are direct school leavers, with a relatively small number of mature students; ethnic diversity is not especially broad. Diversity amongst staff could usefully be improved, especially in relation to the representation of women.

21. Resourcing and facilities

- Accommodation

The subject group is primarily located in the Ellison Building on the City Centre campus; this purpose built facility houses computer facilities, lecture and seminar rooms, resource areas, and laboratories. The Ellison Building has been refurbished to provide better use of space and facilities; the Dean emphasised that accommodation was being constantly reviewed, with a view to housing all built environment disciplines in a single building. The board particularly commends the new studio provision in C Block; this is exemplary in terms of environment and spatial arrangement.

Project work from architecture is on permanent exhibition in the Students Union building, providing excellent exposure for the achievements of the subject group.

- *IT*

It was clear from students' presentations that the investment in computers using both platforms had been beneficial. Plotting and printing facilities were appropriate to the course size, although an investment in advanced software might be considered advisable if the aspiration to become a centre of excellence for digital architecture is to be realised. All studios were wireless, and it appeared that students were taking full advantage of this.

- *Workshops*

Although the board understood that the current workshop provision was relatively recent, there was disappointment expressed that the machinery on offer seemed only adequate for the range of work architecture students might need for 3D work. Use of power tools by students was not possible, due to considerations both of space and health and safety; this was a potential inhibition on sophisticated physical modelling. The practical conjunctions between digital drawing and, for example, CNC work and rapid prototyping had also yet to be made. The board suggested that this provision needed to be reviewed to more accurately reflect the needs of architecture students, as well as other built environment disciplines.

22. Documentation provided

Prior to the visit, the school supplied:

- critical review
- questionnaire response
- questionnaire response appendices (2no volumes)
- supplementary information
- supplementary information appendices
- programme document BA (Hons) Architecture
- programme document Professional Diploma in Architecture

Information on the following was available in the base room:

- student report (tabled on the first day of the visit)
- mission statement
- school development plan and context
- ULT strategy
- assessment policies
- timetables
- external examiners' handbook
- regulations for operation of examinations and assessments
- annual programme reviews
- staff/student committee minutes
- module reviews
- staff CVs
- student support & guidance
- year books
- school research strategy
- prospectuses
- student handbook.