

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board  
to RIBA North West Region,  
Liverpool**

**Confirmed by the RIBA Education  
Committee 28 November 2007**

**The RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional  
Practice in Architecture (Part 3)**

**Dates of Visiting Board: 4 – 5 October 2007**

**1. Information About the Course**

- 1.1 **Course offered for revalidation:**  
The RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part Three)
- 1.2 **Address of the Body administering the examination:**  
RIBA North West  
Unit 101, The Tea Factory  
82 Wood Street  
Liverpool  
L1 4DQ  
  
Tel: 0151 703 0107  
Fax: 0151 703 0108  
Email: [riba.northwest@inst.riba.org](mailto:riba.northwest@inst.riba.org)
- 1.3 **Name of Awarding Body**  
Royal Institute of British Architects
- 1.4 **Name of Course Director**  
Alison Mackinder

**2. Membership of the Visiting Board**

- 2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 4 – 5 October 2007 were:
- Frank Woods (Chair)  
Roz Barr  
Sheila Ryding (Co-Professional Member)
- One member of the Board as originally formulated was unable to attend due to a family bereavement. As set out in the RIBA Validation Procedures, permission for the Board to go ahead was given by the Course Director and the Acting Chair of RIBA Validation Committee. The Board remained quorate throughout.
- Chris Ellis (RIBA) 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 19.05.05), 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 3) in the UK'. Published November 2003. For more information, see [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

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

4.1 At its meeting on 28 November 2007 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed:

##### **Continued validation of:**

The RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part 3).

4.2 The next Visiting Board should take place in 2011.

#### **5. Criteria for Validation**

5.1 On the basis of the sample of work examined, the Visiting Board was satisfied that all the candidates graduating from the examination 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. Standards**

6.1 On the basis of the sample of candidate work examined, the work from the previous two cohorts of the examination listed in 4.1 was inspected during the visit and was found to meet the required standards.

#### **7. Conditions of Validation**

7.1 There were no conditions attached to validation of the examination listed in 4.1.

#### **8. Standard Requirements of Recognition**

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

- i. external examiners being appointed for the examination;
- ii. any significant changes to the examination 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 candidates passing the courses/qualifications listed in 4.1.

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

9.1 The Board was greatly impressed with both the course and examination developed by the RIBA North West. The Board was very confident with both the coverage of the validation criteria and the standards being achieved. The arrangements for the two four day residential seminars and for the professional interviews were exemplary. Despite the growing number, and increasing national profile of candidates for the Examination, the support provided for candidates remains excellent. It was clear that the course and examination continued to serve its local architectural community to good effect. It was, however, increasingly recognised by candidates from outside the region to be offering a very well-managed

rigorous, but supportive Part Three experience and was attracting increasing numbers of candidates from outside the region as a result.

9.2 The particular strengths of the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture were seen to include:

- Two well-organised, intensive four-day residential courses which provided excellent coverage of the Part Three curriculum.
- The course structure, with its four day intensive seminars spanning a weekend and thus particularly suited to the needs of candidates and their practices.
- An experience which was particularly relevant to candidate's experience in practice.
- The really professional approach to the examinations and professional interviews, especially the approach adopted to monitoring/auditing the practice based examination and particularly the way in which this approach draws the practice into the process.
- The new diagnostic test paper taken in the second four-day residential seminar and the opportunity this provides for candidates to assess their suitability to proceed to formal examination.
- Excellent support for candidates from the Course Director and colleagues including visits to all candidates in practice.
- The strong support for the course from the RIBA North West Education Committee and its Chair.
- The clear funding model adopted by the RIBA North West Region for the course.
- The well-organised and carefully structured nature of the work submitted by even the weaker candidates.

### 9.3 Recommendations

The Board has made the following recommendation to the Region. The RIBA expects the Region to report on action taken or planned as a result of the recommendations in the annual monitoring returns submitted and in the mid term review. Failure to act on the recommendation, or provide the RIBA with a clear rationale for not doing so, may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

- 9.3.1 The Board recommends that serious consideration be given to introducing greater variety in the scenarios used as the basis for the written examinations. Although the questions changed from cohort to cohort, the Board felt that a greater challenge to the more able candidates might be posed by much more varied practice scenarios.
- 9.3.2 The Board recommends that the course management team, as it augments its pool of professional examiners, should continue to increase the proportion recruited from outside the RIBA North West Region to better reflect the course's new status as the RIBA's national Part Three and the changing profile of candidates.
- 9.3.3 The Board recommends that the course management team develops a consistent approach to dealing with candidates with disabilities such as dyslexia and candidates whose first language is not English. An addition to the QA manual to cover this aspect of the provision could be helpful.
- 9.3.4 The Board recommends that the course management team pursue its aspiration to develop the course website with a view to facilitating two way interaction: candidate to

candidate and candidate to the course management team. Given the increasing geographical spread of candidates, the ultimate aim might be the website's development as a full virtual learning environment.

#### 9.4 **Advice**

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

- 9.4.1 The Board would advise the course management team to consider reformatting the templates used for the professional examiners and external examiners reports. Revised forms should provide an opportunity for the examiners to confirm that the standards being achieved on the programme are comparable with those on similar programmes the examiners are familiar with. The external examiner proforma might also provide an opportunity to confirm that all successful candidates are meeting all Part Three validation criteria.
- 9.4.2 Given the aspirations of the course management team to continue to grow the Part Three programme and to develop linked initiatives such as courses for practitioners moving into practice management, the Board would advise that consideration be given to staffing issues. It was clear that the present team were working exceptionally hard to deliver the existing programme and that the team would need to be augmented if the plans for growth were to be implemented. This development would most likely be administered by the CPD staff at RIBA NW with the Part Three team acting in an advisory role.

- 9.4.3 The Board found the mapping of the course and examination onto the RIBA/ARB Part Three Validation Criteria provided by the course team one of the best they had seen. The course team are encouraged to share this with future candidates with a view to candidates taking increasing responsibility for ensuring that, through their practice experience and the courses provided, they are well- prepared for sitting the examination.

## 10. **Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports**

The RIBA North West Region Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part Three) was first validated independently by an RIBA ARB Visiting Board held at the Architects Registration Board on 18 March 2003. Technically this was a Re-visiting Board. The previous Visiting Board held on 3 December 1999 had recommended continued validation of the Part Three awards given by the three institutions who were then partners with the RIBA North West: Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moores University and the Manchester School of Architecture. The 1999 Board had recommended independent recognition of the RIBA North West Part Three award subject to a number of conditions being satisfactorily met. The 2003 Board confirmed that these conditions had been met and thus recommended Initial Validation.

The 2003 Board reported that it was pleased to learn that the RIBA North West Region had taken the concerns of the last Visiting Board seriously and had put in place a rigorous and robust quality assurance mechanism to support the course and examination. The Board found that a formal agreement between the RIBA North West

Region and the three participating Institutions (University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University and Manchester Metropolitan University/University of Manchester) had been put in place and that the roles and responsibilities of all parties had been clarified. The Board found that formal Course/Examination Regulations had been established which included a procedure for the appointment of professional and external examiners, and explained their roles and responsibilities and their period of office. The Regulations contained details of a formal appeals mechanism for students, provisions for the collection of feedback from all parties involved as well as the formal examination regulations. The Board was pleased to learn that the Region had appointed a full-time, salaried Course Director and had provided additional part-time administrative support for the course/examination. Given that the 2003 Board found that all of the concerns arising from the 1999 visit had been fully addressed, the Board recommended that independent recognition should be granted to the RIBA NW Region Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture.

## 11. Development of Part Three Provision in the North West

In 1990, the then four schools of architecture in the RIBA North West Region based in the University of Liverpool, Liverpool Polytechnic (now Liverpool John Moores University), the University of Manchester and Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University) agreed to pool their professional practice teaching, hold a single common examination in professional practice and establish a common course to prepare candidates for the Part Three. The organisation, administration and conduct

of the course and examination from the start was the responsibility of the Regional Director of the North West of RIBA operating under the direction of the Region's Examination Committee and Education Committee. In 1999, the Region made a formal application for the validation of the course to replace the previous separate validation of the partner schools. This application was unsuccessful, but in 2003 a revalidation event confirmed that the concerns of the 1999 Board, which primarily related to the need for a formal QA structure, had been addressed and independent validation was granted to the RIBA North West Region Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture.

In 2004, following the establishment of a Memorandum of Agreement, it was agreed to transfer the operation of the national RIBA Part Three Professional Practice Examination from the RIBA Education Department to RIBA North West Region. Consequent upon this, approval was received from both the RIBA and the ARB for the award title to be changed to the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture to reflect the course and examination's new national status.

## 12. Commentary

**12.1 Self Appraisal and Developments since the last visit**  
The Region's Critical Self-Appraisal was a helpful starting point for the Board's deliberations. It was a clear and straightforward document which was appropriately self-critical and included a comprehensive SWOT analysis.

The main development to the course since the last Visiting Board has been the move from a course and examination explained in section 11 above.

**12.2 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit**

The practical arrangements made for the visit were excellent. The documentation provided in advance was comprehensive and succinct, well-structured, informative and easily understood. The additional materials provided in the Baseroom were well structured and clearly labelled. All candidates' work was exceptionally well organised, clearly labelled and easy to navigate. The Board thanks the Course Director for the speed with which additional requests for documentation were dealt with.

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

The Board reviewed all the assessed work from:  
Autumn 2006 examination: 3 lowest passes, 3 middle-level passes and 3 high passes; (86 presented, 70 passed).

Spring 2007 examination: 3 lowest passes, 3 middle-level passes and 3 high passes (60 presented, 43 passed)

The Board was also supplied on request with five examples of complete portfolios of failed candidates from the Spring 2007 examination.

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

The previous Visiting Board report noted that it was the intention of the Director to locate all the professional interviews at a single location. Since 2003 all professional interviews have taken place at Chester Racecourse.

The main issues being considered by the 2003 Board were the quality assurance mechanisms underpinning the course. These have been further developed since that

Board. Specifically the Professional Studies Advisor has taken on the additional role of Quality Manager and, together with the Course Director has produced a Quality Management Manual specifically tailored to the requirements of the course and examination. The manual exists in three sections: Policy, Procedures and Proformas.

The external and professional examiners confirmed that the course team were punctilious in responding to issues that they had raised in their annual reports.

**12.4 Context of the course and examination within the wider provision of the RIBA North West Region**

The programme maintains its links with its local schools of architecture (now three due to the merger of the two Manchester schools). Representatives of the three schools sit on the Region's Examination Committee and Education Committee. The Course Director and PSA make presentations to students at the three North West schools of architecture. In addition, the Region offers a range of support services and courses for students of architecture nationwide who are undertaking periods of professional experience. In addition to the Advanced Diploma (Part 3), the team offer:

- PEDR Monitoring service for students undertaking stage one professional experience.
- Enhanced PEDR Monitoring service for students undertaking stage one professional experience including a visit to the student's office and two intensive one-day courses.

These services are typically addressed to students who will not be returning to take their Part Two at the school they graduated from with their Part One and who thus may be without access to a Professional Studies Advisor.

The Chair of the RIBA NW Education Committee explained that the committee covered both education and CPD. As a result, there were plans to develop additional four day intensive programmes particularly addressed to architects taking on a management role within their practice. See previous comment in section 9.4.2; “This development would most likely be administered by the CPD staff at RIBA NW with the Part 3 team acting in an advisory role”). The long term aim was to work towards the development of a dedicated MBA style qualification for architects. The Board was impressed by the leadership and enthusiasm for the course displayed by the Chair of the Region’s Education Committee and offered its strong support for the proposed initiatives he had outlined.

## 12.5 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to the Part Three qualification

### 12.5.1 *Clarity, Validity & Achievement of Course Objectives*

The overall objective of the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Course and Examination is set out in the course document as being “...to establish a high base line of competence for entry to the professional membership and to form a sound basis for further and continuing professional development.”. The Board confirmed that this overall objective was appropriate, valid and being achieved by successful candidates at all levels.

The opening statement of intentions, set out in the course document, confirms that the course examiners are primarily concerned with;

- i) the candidate’s professional development to date.

- ii) the candidate’s ability to apply theoretical knowledge and technical information to practical problems, and
- iii) the candidate’s appreciation and understanding of:
  - the context for practice;
  - the management of architecture;
  - the management of construction;
  - practice management and business administration.

The Board was pleased to see this clear link to the RIBA/ARB Part Three Validation Criteria in the fundamental objectives and intentions of the course.

### 12.5.2 *Course Design and Content*

The Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice course comprises:

- Monthly study packs which are either posted, available to download from the programme website, or distributed during the residential courses.
- Two intensive four-day residential courses held at Chester University in March/April and June/July
- An office visit to every candidate based in the UK to discuss the requirements of the course and examination with the candidate and their office mentor.
- Commentary on and signing-off of PEDR sheets
- Additional tutorials on request.

Participation in the two four-day intensive residential course is a formal requirement. Candidates are required to be in residence during the full period of the course to allow them to participate fully in the daily programme which runs from 0900 to 2100. Candidates are not allowed to proceed to the examination until this requirement has

been met (except in the event of illness when a doctor's note is required).

12.5.3 *Quality and Coverage of the Syllabus*

The Board was provided with a detailed mapping of the course and examination onto the RIBA/ARB Part Three Validation Criteria. This was a model of clarity and was commended by the Board as an example of good practice. A few minor issues were not marked as being covered in the taught course and/or the examinations. The Board was satisfied that such issues were picked up in the professional interview. Indeed the Board was impressed with the mechanism via which gaps in the candidate's knowledge and/or experience were targeted for discussion in the final interview. As a result, on the basis of the sample of academic work examined, the Visiting Board confirms that all graduates from the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part Three) programme are meeting all the RIBA/ARB Part Three Validation Criteria.

The course team are encouraged to share their excellent mapping with future candidates with a view to candidates taking increasing responsibility for ensuring that, through their practice experience and the courses provided, they are well prepared for sitting the examination.

12.5.4 *Teaching & Learning*

The Board had the opportunity to examine all of the teaching materials made available to the 2007 cohort. It found these to be clearly presented and to provide excellent coverage of Part Three syllabus. It felt, however, that those delivered via the website might have been livelier and might have facilitated interaction. As a result it recommends that the course management team pursue its

aspiration to develop the course website with a view to facilitating two way interaction: candidate to candidate and candidate to the course management team. Given the increasing geographical spread of candidates, the ultimate aim might be the website's development as a full virtual learning environment.

12.5.5 *Admissions*

The Board noted that the number of candidates recruited from the three North West schools of architecture had remained approximately constant over the last four years, but that the number of candidates from outside the North West had grown significantly and now comprised almost 50% of the 176 admitted in 2007. The Board also noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of overseas students admitted with 27 of the 2007 entrants being thus classified. The Board felt that, if there were to be further increase in overseas candidates, the course team might consider setting an English language requirement on the grounds that the level of language required to benefit from a Part Three programme is significantly greater than that required to achieve a Part Two award.

The Board had speculated that potential problems might have arisen as the course increasingly recruited candidates who had not graduated from the three North West schools and who might, therefore, have received significantly different coverage of management practice and law issues in their Part Two course. The professional examiners provided reassurance that they did not see any difference in the performance of candidates based on the origin of their Part Two qualification. They put this down to the excellent preparation provided for the examination by the course director.

12.5.6 *Progression Within the Course*

The Board found that careful guidance was offered to candidates on the ADPPA programme as to their readiness for entry to the examinations. This is done through both the visits made by the Course Director to practices and via the tutorial sessions programmed into the intensive short courses. The Board learned that, following discussions with the candidates themselves and their office mentors, a number are counselled to delay for six months or a year whilst they gain additional experience in different areas of practice. A number of the candidates who attended the meeting with Board members reported changing practices to get the full range of experience they felt they needed before proceeding to the examination. The Board also commended the diagnostic test introduced for the final 2007 intensive short course with its aim of assisting candidates to diagnose their state of readiness for assessment. The result of these initiatives is a pass rate which, apart from a 'blip' in 2005, is at or above the national average. Professional Examiners who had experience of other schools, reported the ADPPA candidates to be notably well-prepared.

12.6 **Detailed Commentary on the Examination leading to Part Three Qualification**

The elements which comprise the assessment for the qualification are:

- Curriculum vitae and self-evaluation
- Record of experience (normally PEDR sheets)
- Case Study
- Written Examination undertaken over three days in the candidate's office
- Professional interview.

Candidates have to pass all elements to be awarded the Advanced Diploma.

The examination is offered twice a year in Spring and Autumn. The Board felt that the provision of two assessment cycles a year was an excellent approach. It allowed the professional interviews for each session to be conducted within a day. More importantly it allowed candidates whose state of readiness for the examination was marginal to postpone their assessment by six months when they may not have been willing to consider a year's delay.

The Board found much to commend in the assessment procedures overall. The assessment procedures were clearly set out in the course documentation and were consistently applied in practice. The Board felt that the ABCF grading system was very appropriate to a professional course such as this.

The Board was particularly impressed by the detailed arrangements for the written examination. This takes place in the candidate's office over a three day period under the control of a senior member of the practice's staff who acts as examination supervisor. The examination supervisor issues the first stage of the paper at 0900 on day one and the second stage of the paper at 0900 on day two and collects hard copies or photocopies of the candidate's work at 1730 on each day. The third day is devoted to the work being typed, checked, collated, bound with two copies to be posted to the RIBA NW office by 1730 with a certificate of posting obtained. The (sealed and signed) hard copies or photocopies of the work done on days one and two are submitted to the examiners to provide evidence that the work has been completed within

the prescribed period. The examiners explained that on the isolated occasion where there was a discrepancy between the documents collected at the end of day one and two and the final typed submission, the former were used as the basis for assessment, however if the candidate was unable to give a reasonable response for the discrepancy the examiners could fail the candidate on the basis of not having complied with the regulations. The examination supervisor is carefully briefed regarding these procedures by the course team. The Board discussed these arrangements in detail with the course team, candidates and examiners and felt that they represented an example of good practice in minimising the risk of plagiarism.

The Board had detailed discussions with both the course team and the professional and external examiners on the issue of the nature of the examination questions. It was clear that the course team and the examiners understood the key issue for an open book examination such as this of setting questions which tested the application of knowledge rather than its reproduction. Although this had been raised as a concern by examiners in previous years, the Board found that recent examination papers well-phrased to require candidates to exercise judgement and (where appropriate) to draw on their personal professional experience.

The only assessment related issue on which the Board wished to make a recommendation to the course team relates to the practice scenarios used as the basis for the examination questions. Although the scenarios had steadily evolved over the years, the Board recommends that serious consideration be given to introducing greater variety in the scenarios used as the basis for the written

examinations. Although the questions changed from cohort to cohort, the Board felt that a greater challenge to the more able candidates might be posed by much more varied practice scenarios.

The Board was impressed by the quality of the submissions made by candidates. Even the weaker candidates submitted well-organised, well-structured, clear documentation and demonstrated in the case studies an ability to be self-critical. The Board commended the course team for the clear guidance they offered to candidates with regard to their submissions for assessment.

#### 12.7 Professional and External examining arrangements

During the visit the Board held a meeting with five Professional Examiners and both External Examiners for the programme. In discussion they commented that:

- A very effective induction process was organised by the Course Director.
- Pairing of professional examiners is done carefully to ensure a balance of experience.
- Examiners are notified in advance of candidates with disabilities such as dyslexia, although formal procedures for such circumstances are yet to be documented.
- Professional Examiners who contribute to setting the examination questions are acutely aware of the need for questions which minimise the opportunity to simply regurgitate knowledge.
- The two External Examiners are also acutely aware of this key issue when they are given the opportunity to appraise draft exam papers before they are confirmed.

- The time available for marking work prior to the professional interviews (4 weeks) is about right
- The one hour scheduled for each professional interview is about right.
- The examiners collectively might manage time better during the interview day to ensure that there is sufficient time for an effective meeting at the end of the day.

The Board considered that RIBA North West had appointed a strong, diligent team of Professional and External Examiners whose comments were heeded carefully by the course management team. There is clear evidence that their advice is acted upon.

The Course Director has been consciously trying to increase the proportion of professional examiners from outside the region and the proportion of female examiners. The Board recommends that the course management, as it augments its pool of professional examiners, should continue to increase the proportion recruited from outside the RIBA North West Region to better reflect the course's new status as the RIBA's national Part Three and the changing profile of candidates.

The Board were pleased to learn that the second of the four-days courses included a "meet the examiners" session at which candidates had the opportunity to talk through with professional examiners the format of the professional interview etc. Candidates told the Board that they had found this session very informative and reassuring.

It was clear to the Board that the Professional and External Examiners had generally been extremely conscientious in providing thoughtful and insightful

feedback in their reports. The one instance where this had not been the case was explained by the course team as an isolated aberration. It was also clear that the External Examiners were getting detailed feedback from the course team on how the issues they raised were being addressed. This was all very commendable. The one issue on which the Visiting Board offers advice to the course team relates to the format of the reports. The Board would advise the course management team to consider reformatting the templates used for the professional examiners and external examiners reports. Revised forms should provide an opportunity for the examiners to confirm that the standards being achieved on the programme are comparable with those on similar programmes the examiners are familiar with. The external examiner proforma might also provide an opportunity to confirm that all successful candidates are meeting all Part Three validation criteria.

## 12.8 Candidates

During the visit, the Board held a meeting with seven current candidates and one recent graduate. The Board considered that the candidates displayed a high level of confidence and professionalism. Overall it was evident that their experience with the ADPPA programme had been very positive. They specifically commended:

- The fact that the course was based in an RIBA Region rather than a university school of architecture and the professionalism which this brought to the programme.
- The intensive four day courses which provided an excellent coverage of Part Three materials.
- The calibre of the speakers involved in the intensive courses.

- The easy access to staff in the Regional Office and the support they provided.
- The opportunity to meet professional examiners during the second of the intensive courses.

The only concerns they raised about the course and examination were:

- The course not being based in a university limited access to libraries, although the material typically needed to support Part Three studies was normally available in practices.
- The focus of the course and examinations was strongly on JCT and traditional forms of contract; coverage of modern procurement methods was limited.
- Although not wishing to change the overall length of the four day courses, the intensity of the courses, particularly towards the end of each day, was challenging.

The Board encourages the course management team to consider these issues and particularly whether some restructuring of the sessions during the intensive courses might assist candidates in remaining focussed towards the end of the long days.

#### 12.9 **Staff**

The course and examinations are run by a team of four dedicated staff members: a Course Director, a Professional Studies Advisor, an Administrator and an Administrative Assistant. Additional support is provided by the former Course Director and by members of the Course and Examination Committee. It was clear to the Board that the staff team brought commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism to their roles. Candidates confirmed that staff members were approachable and

helpful. Given the aspirations of the course management team to continue to grow the Part Three programme and to develop linked initiatives such as courses for practitioners moving into practice management, the Board would advise that consideration be given to staffing issues. It was clear that the staff team were working exceptionally hard to deliver the existing programme and that the team would need to be augmented if the plans for growth were to be implemented. The Board later learned that this development would most likely be administered by the CPD staff at RIBA NW with the Part 3 team acting in an advisory role.

#### 12.10 **Research**

Many of the staff involved in delivering elements of the two residential seminars were active in research in their own fields, several holding doctorates and/or professorial appointments. It was clear from the teaching materials sampled that the research experience of these contributors was informing their contributions to the course.

The Board was shown by the Chair of the Region a new and impressive journal “A” which was being partially funded with the profits from the Part Three course. The Board admired the quality of the publication and applauded the ambition of the Region in its production.

#### 12.11 **Equal Opportunities**

The Course Director undertakes careful monitoring of the male/female balance and the number of candidates from a minority ethnic background. Of the candidates recruited over the period 2004 to 2007, 32% were female and 17% were from minority ethnic groups. The former figure is at about the national average; the latter figure is significantly above the national average. The Course Director is very

aware of the need to provide role models for both female and minority ethnic candidates amongst the speakers for the intensive short courses and the professional examiners.

The Board explored with the professional examiners and candidates, the arrangements made for dealing with candidates with disabilities such as dyslexia and with candidates whose first language was not English. The Board learned that examiners are notified in advance of candidates with disabilities such as dyslexia, although formal procedures for such circumstances are yet to be documented. The Board thus recommends that the course management team develops a consistent approach to dealing with candidates with disabilities such as dyslexia and candidates whose first language is not English. An addition to the QA manual to cover this aspect of the provision could be helpful.

#### 12.12 **Resourcing and facilities**

The Board were provided with a range of photographs of the spaces and facilities used at the University of Chester for the delivery of the two course modules and at Chester Racecourse for the professional interviews. Candidates and examiners confirmed that the rooms used at Chester University provided an excellent environment for the two intensive courses. Professional and External Examiners commented that Chester Racecourse provided an ideal ambience for the professional examinations. The challenge for the course management team will be to maintain this excellent environment as numbers increase.

Candidates' access to other resources they need to pursue their studies were clearly dependent on the practice they were employed by. The majority of the candidates were sponsored through the programme and spoke of practices

generally being supportive in respect of access to libraries, computers etc, although unwilling to allow time for study over and above that for the intensive courses.

The Visiting Board were supplied with a copy of the draft business plan for the ADPPA course and examinations in 2008. It was clear that the course was on a sound financial footing and that careful financial planning was being undertaken.

### 13. **Documentation Provided**

- 13.1 Prior to the visit Board members were provided with a well-structured folder of information including:
- Critical Self Appraisal
  - Course Regulations & Guidance Document
  - Course Programme March/April
  - Course Programme June/July
  - Mapping of course and examinations onto RIBA/ARB Part Three Validation Criteria
  - Details of Professional and External Examiners
  - Quality Management Manual (Policy) for the qualification
  - Cohort Analysis & Student Progression
  - List of Staff Responsible for the Programme & Speakers on the Courses.
  - External Examiner's Reports 2006 and 2007
  - Facilities at University of Chester (intensive course venue)
  - Facilities at Chester Racecourse (venue for professional interviews)
- 13.2 The following additional documentation was provided for Board members in the Base Room:

- Details of all Pass candidates: 2004 Autumn, 2005 Spring, 2005 Autumn, 2006 Spring, 2006 Autumn, 2007 Spring.
- Course Study Notes 2007
- Examination Papers and Notes for Examiners 1990 – 2007
- External Examiners Reports & Responses to External Examiners Reports Autumn 2004 to Spring 2007
- Professional Examiners Reports Autumn 2004 to Spring 2007.
- Full CVs of External Examiners and Professional Examiners.
- Minutes of RIBA Examinations Committee 2003 to 2007.
- ADPPA Exam Board Minutes April 2007.
- RIBA North West Education Committee minutes 2004 – 2007.
- ADPPA Course & Examinations Committee minutes 2003 – 2007.
- RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture Annual Reports 2004, 2005 and 2006.
- Programme QA Management Manual: Policy
- Programme QA Management Manual: Procedures
- Programme QA Management Manual: Proformas
- Results Sheets signed by Examiners 2003 to 2007.
- Final Assessment of Candidates sheets 2005 – 2007.
- Candidate Feedback Summary 2006 and actual candidate feedback forms.
- “How Much do You Know?” – factual multiple choice exam as used on Spring 2007 course.

13.3 On request, Board members were provided with the following additional information during the visit:

- Details of the background (Part 2 school and region) of all candidates enrolled 2004-2007.
- Matrix setting out involvement of professional and external examiners for all assessment sessions 2004-2007.
- Detailed draft budget for the programme 2008.
- Examples of the declarations signed by both candidates and office supervisors confirming circumstances under which the office based examination had been conducted.