

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board
to the University of Cambridge
Department of Architecture**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 13 July 2005

Part One: BA (Hons) Architecture

**Part Three: Postgraduate Certificate in
Professional Practice in Architecture**

Date of Visiting Board: 24 - 25 February 2005

1. Information About the Course

1.1 Courses offered for validation

Part One: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Architecture
(Architectural Tripos) (three years full-time)

Part Three: Postgraduate Certificate in Professional
Practice in Architecture (one year part-time)

1.2 Address of the Institution where the course is delivered

Department of Architecture
Faculty of Architecture & History of Art
1 - 5 Scroope Terrace
CAMBRIDGE
CB2 1PX

Tel: 01223 332958/9
Fax: 01223 332960
W: www.arct.cam.ac.uk

1.3 Name of Awarding Body

University of Cambridge
The Old Schools
Trinity Lane
CAMBRIDGE
CB2 1TN

1.4 Name of Head of Department

Professor Marcial Echenique

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on Thursday 24 and Friday 25 February 2005 were:

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Di Leitch | (Chair) |
| Graeme Jennings | (Vice-Chair) |
| Elspeth Clements | |
| David McClean | |
| Roger France | (Regional Representative) |
| Malcolm Hollis | (Non Architect Member) |
| Nick Hayhurst | (Graduate Member) |

Dr. Chris Ellis (Head of Validation, 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 Sept 2003, effective from September 2003, the "RIBA Criteria for Validation", published March 2002, effective from September 2003, and the RIBA Descriptions and Regulations for the Recognition of Courses and Examinations in Professional Practice & Management, (Part Three).

For more information see www.architecture.com.

4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board confirmed by the Royal Institute of British Architects Education Committee on 13 July 2005.

4.1 The RIBA Education Committee at its meeting on 13 July 2005 confirmed:

Continued Validation of:

Part One: Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Architecture (the Architectural Tripos; three years full-time)

Part Three: Professional Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture (one year part-time)

5. Recommendation of the Visiting Board to the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Construction Industry Council & the EU Directive

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

5.2 The Visiting Board was satisfied that the Part One course met the Construction Industry Council Common Learning Outcomes for Degree Courses in the Built Environment

5.3 The Visiting Board recommends to ARB that the Part One course made a significant contribution to meeting the points of the EU Directive.

6. Criteria for Validation

6.1 On the basis of the academic portfolios examined, the Visiting Board was satisfied that all graduates from both courses listed in 4.1, satisfied all the appropriate Criteria for Validation (which are held in common by the RIBA for validation and the ARB for prescription).

7. Standards

7.1 A range of work from previous year of the courses listed in 4.1 above was inspected during the visit and was found to meet the required standards.

8. Conditions of Validation

8.1 There were no special conditions of validation attached to the courses listed in 4.1.

9. Standard Requirements of Recognition

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

- i. external examiners being appointed for the course;
- ii. any significant changes to the course 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 course listed in 4.1.

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

10.1 Background

10.1.1 At the time of the visit, the Department had just emerged from a period of considerable uncertainty with its long-term future under threat. At its meeting in January 2005, the University's General Board of Faculty had confirmed that the Department's future was secure and that the University would continue to offer the Part One and Part Three courses. The Board was pleased to receive confirmation from the Vice Chancellor that this was indeed the case.

10.1.2 With a typical intake of 40 students to the Part One course, the Department is relatively small. The healthy staff-student ratio and the dedicated studio space provided for all students makes for a close intimate working environment. The Department claims it has a clear focus, the paradigm of the 'humanist architect' with the human occupation of space being emphasised as a key driver in student work.

10.1.3 Strengths of the Department included:

- the generous staff:student ratio;
- the clear sense of identity displayed by the staff team;
- its ability to attract both staff and students of the highest intellectual calibre;
- the impressive level of discussion and debate that permeates the Department;

- the strong studio culture in the Department which clearly supports both peer learning and cross-year linkages;
- the strong research culture and its clear impact on taught courses which display both breadth and depth of teaching
- the collegiate support system;
- the strong emphasis in design work on thinking about space, light and the experience of inhabiting architecture;
- A Part One course with a clear structure and clearly stated and relevant learning outcomes;
- The excellent preparation for practice provided by the Part One course.
- A well-organised, well-taught Part Three course;
- The strong support for the Part Three course from practitioners both as contributors and professional examiners.

10.2 Recommendations

The Board has made the following recommendations to the Institution. The RIBA expects the Institution to report on action taken or planned as a result of the recommendation in the annual monitoring returns submitted by the school and in the mid term review. Failure by an Institution 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.

10.2.1 The practitioners who work as part-time studio teachers make a fundamental contribution to the quality of the educational provision and are central to the Department's

future strategy. The University should recognise that this is a resource which needs to be maintained. The Board recommends that the Department recognises the importance of this contribution by pursuing the strategy of appointing key practitioners to the role of affiliate lecturer. As it develops its new staffing strategy, the Department is encouraged to develop an appointment/selection, management and communication strategy to ensure the continued delivery of a coherent course with effective linkages between taught elements and design projects. To this end, both full-time and part-time staff should be involved in induction and review procedures and all need to engage fully with external examiners' reports.

10.3 **Advice**

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

10.3.1 The Board strongly supports the Department in its intention to develop a new Part Two programme as a means of ensuring long term success and developing an international reputation in line with institutional aspirations. The Board believes this is important, not just because it fills a key gap in the Department's teaching portfolio (providing aspirational examples for Part One students and high quality candidates for the Part Three programme), but also because synergies between research and teaching are more obvious at graduate/ postgraduate level.

10.3.2 The Board believes that the Department could do more to disseminate the quality of work produced by its students and thus supports the proposal that the profile of the Department would be raised if a London venue were to be found for the final year show, either instead of, or in addition to, its normal Cambridge location.

10.3.3 The Board supports the Department's accommodation strategy with its aim of co-locating all its activities on one site. The Board advises the University that it sees clear merits in this approach which should assist the Department in achieving both its research and teaching objectives. The Board hopes this can be achieved with all students in one building as this was a major issue at the student meeting.

10.3.4 The Board advises the Department to develop formal arrangements, which would permit architecture students to use the impressive facilities of the adjacent engineering laboratories and not to lose access to the impressive facilities of CUMIS.

10.3.5 The Board believes that more could be done to raise the international profile of the Department's teaching, so that it matched the level of recognition already achieved by the Department's research. The Board recognises the difficulties in this respect faced by a small department, but advises that a strategy based around the University's reputation and the Department's commitment to sustainability and the 'humanist architect' might be pursued.

10.3.6 The Board congratulated the Department on having re-established a strong Part Three programme. As the programme continues to develop the Board would advise

the Department to investigate a re-balancing of the examination content to ensure that such areas as contract law and administration receive more prominence.

10.3.7 The Board was entirely confident that appropriate assessment decisions were being made by the Part Three Examiners, but would advise the Department to consider making the assessment regime more transparent. This and the maintenance of appropriate paper-trails would be important should the Department face any appeals or complaints in the future.

10.3.8 The Board noted that whilst the External Examiners for the Part One course were of high calibre, all were drawn from practice and collectively had only limited experience of other academic institutions. The Board would thus advise that, as the Department refreshes its Part One external examiner pool, it should look to create a team with a greater awareness of national and international architectural education.

10.3.9 With the closure of the Part Two course, the Board would advise the Department to provide clear guidance on how graduates are to be supported until they have a clear contact with the school at which they are to undertake their Part Two.

11. Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports

11.1 The last full Visiting Board to the Department of Architecture, Cambridge University took place on 28 and 29 October 1999. The Visiting Board recommended **Continued Validation** of:

Part One: BA (Hons) Architecture
(three years full-time)

Part Two: Diploma in Architecture
(two years full-time)

Part Three: The Professional Practice Examination

This recommendation was accepted by both the RIBA and the ARB.

Given the former five-year cycle, the next Visiting Board should have taken place in 2004. It was, however, agreed by the RIBA and ARB that the Department's existing validation and prescription would be extended by a year to allow a more even spread of validation visits and prescription applications across the new four year cycle.

11.2 In its report the 1999 Visiting Board commented:

"The School has many strengths. These include a highly committed and supportive staff, a very high quality student intake and excellent resources. However, the Board found that there remains a problem with accommodation. The Board was pleased to note that a University-funded accommodation feasibility study is in progress. The period since the last visiting board has seen some changes in the Department. The Department is seeking to increase its graduate culture. The introduction of an additional MPhil course has contributed to this, as has the process of establishing a Graduate School. The Department, in close association with the Department of Engineering, has established a new part-time masters' course. The Board noted that the current Head of School is due to retire in September 2000. The Board was

impressed by the first year of the Part One course, which provides students with a solid grounding for advancing their skills. Students on the Diploma (Part Two) may benefit from some further exploration of experimental design, so that the programme reaches its full potential and so that the students' capabilities are stretched further."

12. Commentary

12.1 Self-Appraisal and Developments since the Last Visit

The Critical Self-Appraisal provided by the Department was well-written, succinct, honest and frank and had a strong focus on educational issues. It provided an excellent basis for the Board's subsequent deliberations. The Critical Self Appraisal included a detailed commentary on developments since the 1999 Visiting Board and was extremely open and honest about the Department's recent discussions with the University authorities regarding its long term future. It was clear to the Board that in the short time since the Department's future was assured, the position had stabilised and the Department was already developing plans to exploit opportunities, for example the development of a new-style Part Two course. Major changes in the Department since the last visit have included:

- Professor Alan Short was appointed Head of Department in 2000; Professor Marcial Echenique took over this role in October 2004.
- Following detailed consultation with the ARB and RIBA, the Part Three programme, entry to which had been suspended following the 1998 intake, was reinstated. The Part Three now operates under the auspices of the University's Institute of Continuing Education.

- In 2002/3 a mid-year review was introduced for the second and final years of the Part One course. This provides External Examiners with an early opportunity to experience the design projects. It is followed by a feedback conference with full-time staff and visiting tutors.
- The Department's diploma programme has been closed; the last intake was in 2003.
- From 2004/5 the Part One has reverted to a year system for the teaching of design to conserve some academics' time for research, particularly in the summer research term.
- The more substantial restructuring required by the University to ensure the Department's survival has led to the recent closure of two MPhil programmes in "History & Philosophy of Architecture" and "Architecture & the Moving Image".

12.2 Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit

The Department provided the documentation required for the Visiting Board in timely fashion. The documentation was clearly presented and well structured, although detailed teaching materials and staff CVs, which the Board would have been happy to view in the baseroom, were also sent in advance. All requests for additional materials made during the visit were dealt with promptly and efficiently. The programme for the meetings and activities required by the Board was well organised. The Board particularly appreciated the effort that had gone into the organisation and presentation of the student portfolios. Their clear structure and annotation greatly assisted Board members in their work. The Board was, however, deeply disappointed at the small number of students attending the student meeting and the lack of visiting tutors attending the staff meeting.

12.2.1 Record of Academic portfolios sampled

BA (Hons) Architecture (Part One), Architectural Tripos:

1st year: 3 lowest pass, 4 middle and 1 high pass (from a cohort of 39)

2nd year: 4 lowest pass, 2 middle and 2 high pass (from a cohort of 28)

3rd year: the lowest pass from each of four studios, 2 middle and 2 high pass (from the graduating cohort of 37)

Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture (Part Three)

For Part Three, the Board examined the complete assessed work of the three lowest pass, two middle pass and two high pass candidates (from a cohort of 16).

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

The main concerns expressed in the report of the 1999 Visiting Board related to accommodation, particularly the overcrowded conditions in the Library. Since the last Board the Library has been substantially extended with a considerable improvement in the working conditions. Undergraduate and diploma studios were refurbished and networked in 2003. The School of Arts and Humanities has also prioritised the full refurbishment of the Department's Scroope Terrace accommodation in its accommodation strategy and in its capital bids to the University administration.

The External Examiners confirmed that the Department responded to issues raised in their reports and that they did see changes as a result of their comments.

12.4 Context of the courses within the wider provision of the Faculty and School

The Department of Architecture is located in the same building, and has close teaching and research links with the Department of History of Art. The two departments make up the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art. The Faculty is a member of the University's School of Arts and Humanities.

A course in architectural studies was first established in the University in 1912. Exemption from the RIBA's Intermediate Examination was first granted in 1914. Part Two and Part Three recognition was gained in 1960. The Part Three course was in abeyance from 1998 until 2003.

The validated courses run alongside a number of MPhil programmes in "History & Philosophy of Architecture", "Environmental Design in Architecture" and "Architecture & the Moving Image" and an M.St. in Interdisciplinary Design in the Built Environment". The MPhils in History & Theory of Architecture and "Architecture & the Moving Image" are being suspended from the end of the 2004/5 academic year. The MPhil in Environmental Design in Architecture and the M.St. will be retained, but both face challenges; the MPhil because the University is proposing to withdraw the EPSRC bursaries currently allocated to the course and the MSc which has to increase recruitment from a current figure of 25 to 35. The Department currently has 41 full-time and 4 part-time PhD research students.

12.5 Detailed Commentary on the Part One course:

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Architecture - the Architectural Tripos (three years full-time)

12.5.1 *Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives*

The overall aims of the Cambridge University Part One programme are to:

- Produce graduates equipped to play leading roles in the architectural profession, in related areas of design and construction, and in scholarship;
- Emphasise an understanding of architecture in its cultural context.

The Board found these to be clearly stated, valid and entirely appropriate given the calibre of students recruited and the institutional context. The Board found clear evidence that these overall aims were being achieved by the programme.

The Board believes that more could be done to raise the national and international profile of the Department's teaching so that it matched the level of recognition already achieved by the Department's research. The Board recognises the difficulties in this respect faced by a small department, but advises that a strategy based around the University's reputation and the Department's commitment to sustainability and the 'humanist architect' might be pursued.

12.5.2 *Course design and content*

The Board found the Part One course to be well designed and the content to be of extremely high quality throughout. The course had an impressive balance of knowledge input and studio application set in a framework, which focussed on the development of students' intellectual skills of enquiry and critique. The Board would simply invite the Department to continue to find new ways of injecting challenge and variety into the programme such that the exceptionally able students continue to be thoroughly challenged.

The Department provided a very clear mapping of the Part One course content onto the RIBA Validation Criteria. In addition to indicating the specific courses that covered elements of the criteria, the mapping provided a helpful written commentary and a linkage to specific learning outcomes within the courses.

For the 2004/5 academic year, the Department has discontinued the vertical studio system in which second and third year students were taught together and replaced this with a year structure. The Board was pleased to see that the Department has managed to maintain some of the diversity and the close links with tutors of the former system by providing two studio options with groups of 14-16 students. The Board also hopes the Department will investigate ways of ensuring that the creative dialogue between the years is maintained in the new approach.

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

- *Design*

The Board was satisfied that all the Validation Criteria in the area of Design were being met by all graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme. The Board saw evidence of a well-structured programme of first year design exercises. These were clearly successful in their aim of providing an introduction to a wide range of architectural issues, but also to support students who might all have impressive A level grades, but quite different backgrounds in terms of drawing and design skills. The second and third year work seen by the Board had been produced by students working in four vertical studios. Although the work of the four studios dealt with

different building types and sites, the Board saw clear evidence of common learning outcomes being achieved. Indeed, the Board believed there was scope for greater diversity in approach and critical positions adopted for the very able cohort of students.

- *Technology & Environment*

The Board was satisfied that all Validation Criteria in the area of Technology & Environment were being met by all graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme. The Board saw the technology and environment teaching and its integration into design work as being a clear strength of the Department. The work clearly benefited from the strong research work being undertaken in the Martin Centre, particularly in the area of sustainability. The Board saw evidence of the Validation Criteria in this area being met in impressive examination answers and in design work clearly informed by technological issues.

- *Cultural Context*

The Board was satisfied that all the Validation Criteria in the area of Cultural Context were being met by all graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme. This was seen to be a clear strength of the Department. The well established lecture programme provided both breadth, depth and real intellectual challenge. The Board saw evidence of design work clearly rooted in an understanding of context, both social and geographical. The Board did, however, invite the staff responsible for this area of the curriculum to continually review the currency of the material presented in the lecture series.

- *Communication Skills*

The Board was satisfied that all the Validation Criteria in the area of Communication Skills were being met by all

graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme. The Board was impressed with the activities in the year one studio designed to support skills development in this area. This clearly provided an excellent foundation. In the second and third year design work, the Board saw a wide range of hand drawn, computer generated and physical modelling techniques, displaying a good level of skill and used appropriately. Written work seen by the Board was of an exceptionally high standard including some very impressive Part One dissertations. The Part One students who attended the Board's meeting were also highly articulate. Board members were also impressed by the overall standard of the academic portfolios presented, particularly at lowest pass level.

- *Management Practice & Law*

The Board was satisfied that all the Validation Criteria in the area of Management Practice & Law were being met by all graduates from the BA (Hons) Architecture programme. The main vehicle for this is the Year Three Case Studies course, although fundamentals are introduced in design work throughout the course. The Board particularly commended the Case Study course with its programme of site visits. Students also benefit from one-to-one end-of-term meetings with the Directors of Studies in their Colleges which aim to help students reflect upon their working practices and how these can be improved.

- *Preparation for Professional Experience*

The Case Studies course in the third year includes site visits alongside lectures. It introduces the students in a structured way to the nature of architectural practice and the legal and contractual framework. Students confirmed that this, plus the excellent support they received from the

practitioners who teach in the design studios, provided an excellent basis for their first stage professional experience.

12.5.4 *Progression within the course*

The Part One programme achieves impressive progression rates. Of the 43 entrants to the programme in 1999, 37 graduated in 2003. Of the 40 entrants in 2000, 35 graduated in 2003. Of the 41 entrants in 2001, 37 graduated in 2004. Comments from students suggested that the additional support system provided in the colleges was one of the reasons for the impressive progression rates. The majority of the students who left the programme did so during or on completion of the first year of the programme, taking advantage of the opportunities within the Cambridge Tripos system to transfer to another subject.

12.5.5 *Assessment*

The course has clear procedures in place to ensure that all graduates meet all elements of the validation criteria. It is an absolute requirement. Failure in the studio component leads to overall failure even if an aggregate mark of 40% is achieved. A pass (40%) is also normally required in each of the written papers. The examiners work to a clear rubric that states: "Students must demonstrate fulfilment of the ARB criteria to the satisfaction of the internal and external examiners in addition to an aggregate pass mark. In the work of the 2004 graduating cohort examined by the Board, all graduates had achieved marks of 40% or more in all elements. It was clear to the Board in their discussion with the External Examiners that they fully understood the requirement that all graduates had to meet all validation criteria.

The Board was supplied with copies of a procedures document which had been introduced from the 2004 examinations, setting out procedures for double marking and ensuring that the process was fully compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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

The intake target for the Part One programme is 40 to 45. Almost all the recruits have at least three A levels at grade A. The strength of the Department's recruitment is demonstrated by the fact that it currently attracts more applications per place than any other department in the University. For entry in October 2004 the ratio was 8.57 applicants per place. The next highest discipline, Philosophy, achieved a ratio of 6.07 applicants per place.

Within the Cambridge University system, admissions decisions are made at College level. The majority of Cambridge colleges do admit students to study architecture. Problems with this indirect process led to a reduced intake of 30 students in the 2002/3 academic year. The Department now maintains close liaison with the Directors of Studies in the colleges to ensure that the overall target numbers are met.

There is no entry with advanced standing to the programme.

12.6 Detailed Commentary on the Part Three course:

Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture (one year part-time)

12.6.1 The Board was satisfied that all the Part Three Validation Criteria were being met by candidates who graduated from

-
- the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture.
- 12.6.2 The Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture is a formal award of the Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education. The Academic Programmes Manager for Continuing Education confirmed in her meeting with the Board that the Part Three was subject to the Institute's usual External Examining, QA (including annual monitoring), complaints and appeals procedures. The Institute is familiar with administering programmes with professional recognition.
- 12.6.3 The taught programme that helps candidates prepare for the Part Three examination includes 2 three-day and 1 two-day workshops. The workshops are intensive experiences typically involving work from 0900 to 2200. The Board found the taught programme to be well structured and was impressed by the strong contribution to the workshops from high profile practitioners. The Board was satisfied that the taught content generally provided a good coverage of the Validation Criteria.
- 12.6.4 The Board was satisfied that the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice in Architecture was being delivered in accordance with the RIBA Descriptions and Regulations for the Recognition of Courses and Examinations in Professional Practice & Management, (Part Three). The course had a strong team of Professional Examiners, all with experience of examining at other institutions and a very experienced External Examiner drawn from the academic world.
- 12.6.5 The School provided a very helpful mapping of the Part Three course onto the RIBA Validation Criteria. This provided a clear indication of where each area of the Criteria was covered in the taught course and where it was assessed. The Board found that the mapping was accurate. As the programme continues to develop the Board would, however, advise the Department to investigate a re-balancing of the examination content to ensure that such areas as contract law and administration receive more prominence.
- 12.6.6 The Board was entirely confident that appropriate assessment decisions were being made by the Part Three examiners, but would advise the Department to consider making the assessment regime more transparent. This and the maintenance of appropriate paper-trails would be important should the Department face any appeals or complaints in the future.
- 12.7.7 The Board found that the Part Three course handbook, whilst covering the basics, was rather thin and suggests that it could be augmented with additional information to provide a single point of reference for candidates.
- 12.7 **External examining arrangements**
 In their meeting with the Board, the External Examiners for the Part One and Part Three programmes were very supportive of the Department. Their recent reports were very positive indeed and expressed complete confidence in the assessment regime and the standards set. The External Examiners confirmed that they were completely satisfied with the opportunities they were given to engage with the Department's assessment process. They also confirmed that they received prompt and detailed responses to their reports and that they did generally see action follow from their recommendations.

The Board noted that whilst the External Examiners for the Part One course were of high calibre, all were drawn from practice and collectively had only limited experience of other academic institutions. The Board would thus advise that, as the Department refreshes its Part One external examiner pool, it should look to create a team with a greater awareness of national and international architectural education.

The Part Three Professional and External Examining team were drawn from both academia and practice, were very experienced, and all had current and/or previous experience of examining at other institutions.

12.8 **Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience**

Part One Students are provided with a good introduction to professional practice through the Case Studies course in year three. The Board received rather mixed views from students when they asked about support during the 'year out'. One commented that a good explanation had been received in advance and that everything necessary had been supplied. Another 'year-out' student commented that he was not clear who was supposed to sign his PEDR record. With the closure of the Part Two course, the Board would advise the Department to provide clear guidance on how graduates are to be supported until they have a clear contact with the school at which they are to undertake their Part Two.

Part Three graduates and candidates confirmed that they had received excellent support from the Department's network of Professional Studies Advisors and the Course Tutor as they prepared their PEDR Records/Logbooks for assessment.

12.9 **Students**

The Board met 22 representatives of the student group including members from the second and third years of the Part One programme, year out students, Part One graduates and candidates and graduates from the Part Three programme. The Board was disappointed that it did not have the opportunity to engage with a more representative group of students and that there were no first year students present. Given the small number of students present, the Board invited student representatives to canvass opinion from the general body of students and to make the findings available to the Board's secretary. In advance of the visit, the Board had been supplied with the outcomes of student feedback from the 2003/4 academic year and a response prepared on behalf of students and graduates in the Department to the General Board of Faculty's Working Group on the Department of Architecture. In both their formal feedback and their meeting with the Board, students were extremely positive about their experiences of the Department. They identified the particular strengths of the Department as being:

- The small intimate nature of the Department and the close relationship between staff and students
- The positive orientation towards design and creativity
- The strong intellectual base provided by the challenging lecture series in all subjects
- The particular strength of history and theory teaching in the Department
- The excellent faculty library and its location in the same building as the studios
- The well-planned weekly timetable with its sensible pattern of studio and lecture activities
- Additional support, both academic and pastoral, provided at college level through the tutorial system

- The excellent preparation for practice and the good support provided during the year out.
- The impressive team of lecturers on the Part Three programme
- The particular focus in the Part Three on business start-up
- The excellent support provided by the Part Three study networks

Specific concerns raised by students included:

- The Department did need a more outward-looking focus; a London venue for the Department's graduate show was being investigated to provide greater visibility
- Year two students regretted the loss of the vertical studio system which had provided an obvious challenge to match the standard of year three student work.
- The proposals to move year three student studios across the road to Bene't Place was regretted as it would diminish the linkages between the years which was currently one of the strengths of the Department.
- The ability of architecture students to use the excellent, but under-utilised engineering workshops was currently only available as a favour. Students would appreciate a formal relationship being established.
- Concern that the written exams were over-weighted by comparison with studio work given the limited time for revision.
- Regret that the link established with Ahmedabad, India had been discontinued for the 2004/5 academic year.

- The Department's loss of management control over CUMIS could lead to reduced access for architecture students.
- The closure of specialist masters courses and the loss of the staff involved might reduce the linkage between research and teaching and limit the availability of specialist supervision for dissertation topics

The Board was greatly impressed by the articulate, highly motivated, intelligent and committed student group and particularly the contribution they had made to the campaign to save the Department from closure.

12.10 **Staff:**

The Board found the full-time staff of the School to be a strong, well-qualified, cohesive, international team. The Board was, however, seriously disappointed that it did not have the opportunity to meet any of the part-time staff, drawn from practice, who contribute substantially to studio teaching.

It was clear to the Board that there was a real commitment amongst all full-time staff to research and to bring the fruits of that research into teaching. This was complemented by the substantial involvement of practitioners in studio teaching.

With a current full-time student population of 125 and 16 full-time established staff members, the student-staff ratio is approximately 7.8:1. The 2005/6 academic year is expected to commence with a student population of 120 and a full-time staff complement of 14, yielding an increased SSR of 8.6:1. In addition, 20 practitioners are engaged on fractional 0.4 or 0.2 contracts as studio tutors and between 20 and 40 visiting lecturers contribute to the

programmes each year. A number of the Department's Research Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows contribute to the supervision of dissertations and technical reports.

The Board was pleased to learn that two of the three new appointments made available to the Department by the University (a professorship and a lectureship) have already been advertised. The Board hopes that new research oriented staff will have the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the teaching programme.

It was clear to the Board that the practitioners who work as part-time studio teachers make a fundamental contribution to the quality of the educational provision and are central to the Department's future strategy. The University should recognise that this is a resource that needs to be maintained. The Board thus recommends that the Department recognises the importance of this contribution by pursuing the strategy of appointing key practitioners to the role of affiliate lecturer. As it develops its new staffing strategy, the Department is encouraged to develop a management and communication strategy to ensure the continued delivery of a coherent course with effective linkages between taught elements and design projects. To this end, both full-time and part-time staff should be involved in induction and review procedures and all need to fully engage with external examiners' reports.

12.11 **Research:**

Cambridge is a research-intensive university that expects all its departments to achieve a rating of at least 5 in the Research Assessment Exercise. The Department of Architecture had dropped from a score of 5 in the 1996 RAE to a score of 4 in 2001. It is now generally

recognised that architecture as a discipline was not well served by the 2001 RAE. It was clear to the Board that the Department has always had a strong research base administered through the Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies. The Centre co-ordinates the Department's funded research contracts and physically houses the "Sustainable Design" research group. The Department describes its research focus as being concerned with 'the three cornerstones of sustainable architecture and urbanism: environmental, cultural and socio-economic'. It sets out three principles that underpin its research:

- A profound sense of responsibility towards the environment
- A respect for architectural history and precedent
- The development of advanced mathematical and image based techniques.

The Department has made a number of structural changes since 2001 in an effort to secure a higher RAE rating in 2008. A number of less research-active staff have taken early retirement. The Department has been granted three new appointments to allow additional young research active staff to be recruited.

It was clear that the School had a mature research culture and that its research strongly informed teaching particularly in the areas of architectural history and theory and sustainability. The Board hoped that this would continue to be the case despite the closure of two of the MPhil programmes which provided an obvious linkage between Part One and the research teams.

12.12 **Equal Opportunities**

The Board was supplied with copies of the University's clear Equal Opportunity Policy and Codes of Practice. It was obvious in discussions with the Head of Department and lecturers that staff in the Department were well aware of the particular issues facing the discipline of architecture. 48% of the Part One students are female. Of the postgraduate students in the Department's 42% are female. Both figures are significantly above the national norms.

Since 1988, the University has operated a bursary scheme designed to support students from poor family backgrounds. About 750 bursaries of up to £1,000 per annum were awarded in 2004. The maximum figure of £1,000 is guaranteed to students who qualify for full fee remission from their LEA. The University has a series of well-developed outreach projects via which staff and students engage with pupils from schools with low HE participation rates.

Of the 17 established staff in the Department, four (including one professor) are female. The Board heard from the Part Three Course Tutor how she specifically recruited female architects to the teaching team to provide exemplars for the female candidates. The Board was also pleased to note the substantial representation of women amongst the Department's team of external and professional examiners.

12.13 **Resourcing and Facilities:**

- General

The Department is currently spread across three sites. It has a development plan to consolidate its activities on two sites: Scroope Terrace and Bene't Place which are close to

each other. Students have some reservations about the plan which, if implemented, would retain studio spaces for all students, but see third year studios relocated to Bene't Place. The plans would, however, have the great benefit of locating the Department's researchers, currently located at the Martin Centre, installed at the heart of the Department in Scroope Terrace. Longer term, there are plans for extensions to Scroope Terrace which would allow the whole of the Department's activities to be co-located. The Board supports the Department's accommodation strategy with its aim of co-locating all its activities on one site. The Board advises the University that it sees clear merits in this approach which should assist the Department in achieving both its research and teaching objectives. The Board hopes this can be achieved with all students in one building as this was a major issue at the student meeting.

- Studios

The Department is committed to providing all its Part One students with a dedicated studio space. Although some of the studio accommodation is not ideal, the Board encountered a vibrant and lively environment, an obviously healthy studio culture and a strong sense of an integrated student community. The introduction of card access systems has allowed studio opening hours to be extended in response to student demands. Students can continue to work in their studios up to midnight with a student duty rota.

- IT

Substantial investment has been made in IT facilities since the 1999 visit when the Board described both hardware and software as minimal. In 2003/4 there was a significant investment in computers and software and a new IT

network was installed throughout the studios. In the current year developments have continued with ceiling mounted data projectors being installed in the main teaching rooms, together with a new server and new network and system management tools. At Scroope Terrace there are now two computer rooms containing 16 Apple Macintosh G4 computers with high resolution monitors plus scanners and printers. Students also have access to further facilities which are located at the Martin Centre, although these are primarily for the use of MPhil students. Students, many of whom had their own laptops, confirmed that the hardware and software available was adequate for their purposes.

- Workshops

The Department has its own workshop in the basement of Scroope Terrace. The workshop is well-equipped with power and bench tools, primarily for woodworking. Its small size restricts access to no more than six students at a time. Students report that this only causes problems on the run-up to submission dates and that with sensible programming of work, that for more substantial jobs, students may sometimes be able to gain access to engineering laboratories. The Board advises that would permit architecture students to use the impressive facilities of the adjacent engineering laboratories.

- Photographic Facilities

Students have access to a fully equipped photographic studio and darkroom which is managed by a full-time photographer. The section also supports digital photographic requirements, providing scanners and large format printers/plotters.

- Specialist Facilities

Students have access to the impressive facilities and research work of CUMIS (the Cambridge University Moving Image Studio), which also runs specific short courses for undergraduates. The Studio provides digital moving image technologies in support of both teaching and research activities in a number of university departments. CUMIS has been managed since 1999 by the Department of Architecture, but this link is being lost in the current reorganisation. The Board hopes that the facilities of CUMIS, much valued by students, are not lost to the Department by the restructuring and the closure of the linked MPhil programme.

- Library

The Faculty Library is housed in Scroope Terrace adjacent to the Department's teaching spaces and studios. The Library has an impressive collection of over 20,000 books (including an impressive rare books collection) and 10,000 bound journals. It has subscriptions to over 100 current periodicals. There is a newly installed electronic cataloguing system which provides access to the University's library system and an international network of libraries. The full-time librarian is supported by two part-time senior librarians and a part-time junior librarian. The library also houses a slide collection containing 70,000 slides supported by a part-time slide curator.

The space problems highlighted by the 1999 Visiting Board have been addressed by a major extension into the basement and the library has now more than adequate space to accommodate its users.

The library is open from 0915 to 1730 during term time, vacation times vary. Students also have access to their

college libraries, several of which have particularly strong architecture collections, and the main University library which has extended opening hours.

13. Attachments

13.1 Prior to the visit, the Board was provided by the School with the following documentation:

- Critical Self Appraisal
- Student Views
- Response to Questionnaire
- BA (Hons) Undergraduate Course Handbook
- BA (Hons) mapping to Validation Criteria
- BA (Hons) Lecture List
- BA (Hons) Lecture Notes for all three years
- Part Three Course Handbook
- BA(Hons) Design studio briefs for all years
- Part Three Course Handbook
- Part Three - Mapping to Validation Criteria
- Part Three Reading List & Lecture Notes
- Supplementary Information

13.2 The Board was provided with the following additional information in the base room and during the visit::

- Cohort analysis
- Detailed mark sheets for both Part One and Part Three
- Examination Papers for Part One and Part Three
- Financial information for the last three cohorts on the Part Three course
- Departmental Regulations for Marking Procedures
- Examples of forms used to record first and second markers' assessment plus justification and commentary on reconciliation

- Department's Strategy Document: "Research-Led Sustainable Design"

13.3 Board members also had access to a networked PC allowing access to a range of additional University documentation