

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Visiting Board  
to the University of Greenwich**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 6 April 2009

**School of Architecture and Construction**

**BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One  
Diploma in Architecture, Part Two  
Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural  
Practice, Part Three**

Date of visiting board: 12/13 June 2008

## 1. Information About the Courses

### 1.1 Courses offered for revalidation:

**Part One:** University of Greenwich, BA (Hons)  
Architecture (three years full-time, four years part time)

**Part Two:** University of Greenwich, Diploma in  
Architecture (two years full time, three years part time)

**Part Three:** University of Greenwich, Postgraduate  
Diploma in Architectural Practice (part time)

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

University of Greenwich  
School of Architecture and Construction  
Avery Hill Campus, Mansion Site  
Bexley Road  
Eltham SE9 2PQ

T: 020 8331 8000

F:

W: [www.gre.ac.uk](http://www.gre.ac.uk)

### 1.2 Name of Awarding Body

The University of Greenwich

### 1.3 Name of Head of School

Professor Richard Hayward

## 2. Membership of the Visiting Board

2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on  
12/13 June 2008 were:

Dr Robert Felix (Chair)

Derek Cottrell (Vice Chair)

Tina Frost

Andy Bourne

Elizabeth Dow

Mike Packham – co-professional member

Gillian Lambert – student/graduate member

Kate Cheyne – RIBA London Region Representative.

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk (RIBA) was in attendance as  
Secretary to the Board.

David Gloster (RIBA Director of Education) and Sarah  
Bedding (Validation Manager, RIBA) were in attendance  
as observers.

## 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, 'Tomorrow's Architect,'  
published March 2003, effective from September 2003,  
and 'Description & Regulations for the recognition of  
courses, programmes and examinations in Professional  
Practice and Management, (Part 3) in the UK. For more  
information see [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

## 4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board Confirmed by the Royal Institute of British Architects Education Committee 6 April 2009

### 4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board

4.1 At its meeting on 6 April 2009, the RIBA Education  
Committee confirmed:

**Continued Validation of:**

**Part Two:** University of Greenwich, Diploma in Architecture (two years full time, three years part time)

**Part Three:** University of Greenwich, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice (part time)

- 4.2 The Visiting Board recommends to RIBA Education Committee:

**Continued Validation with Conditions of:**

**Part One:** University of Greenwich, BA (Hons) Architecture (three years full-time, four years part time)

- 4.3 The next full visiting board should take place in 2012.

## 8. Conditions of Validation

- 8.1. The visiting board recommends that the course listed in 4.2 receive conditional continued validation. The following conditions of recognition apply:
- i. The School should ensure students consistently meet all the criteria required to satisfy Part One: Design, particularly the need to demonstrate coherent architectural designs integrating knowledge of the ways that analysis, research, context, and the preparation and development of a brief influence a design proposal. The Board further considered that the School should ensure design work consistently demonstrated knowledge of the ways in which architectural histories and theories, and physical, artistic, and cultural contexts informed the design process.

- ii. The School should put in place systems to ensure that all students at lowest pass level consistently meet all Part One criteria.
- iii. The School will submit a report to the RIBA clarifying how these conditions will be met, this report to be received two weeks before the RIBA Validation Committee 28 January 2009.
- iv. A revisit by a subgroup of three members (providing continuity with the present Board) will take place in summer 2009 to consider the School's progress towards meeting these conditions.

## 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 & Commentary Contained in the Full Report

10.1 Architecture at Greenwich has made good progress since the last Visiting Board, thanks to the commitment of staff, students and institution. The Board appreciated the enthusiasm and commitment to architecture of the Vice-Chancellor. The next few years will bring further exciting developments and challenges with the projected permanent move to Greenwich. This has the potential to have a profound impact on all aspects of the School and its ethos. The University is well-grounded in architecture at a political level and the Board shared the School's confidence that support for architecture, in the run up to the new building, in transition and in the future, would be provided at senior management level. The Board hopes that the recommendations and advice contained in the report will help the School to consolidate and build on its current strengths and develop new ones, with a view to helping it to achieve its ambitions.

10.2 The School's strengths include

- Its commitment to providing opportunity for a wide range of students. The University has created a student population that is diverse in all senses of the word.
- Its present co-location at Avery Hill and Greenwich. Both sites have significant benefits which are appreciated by the students. Although the proposed Greenwich development is exciting, it is important to acknowledge the appreciation of and affection for Avery Hill expressed by many of the students.
- The belief and support of senior university management, which has committed to providing a

flagship purpose-built building at the heart of the Maritime Campus.

- The enthusiastic and articulate student body
- The School has a strong and diverse staff body who have clear ambitions for the School and, leading directly from this ambition, the Board was able to view some original and exciting work.
- Coverage of cultural context.
- The School's aspirations to be a school of international standing.
- The potential for interdisciplinary learning and cross-collaboration and the intention to realise this.
- The exciting potential for the already diverse areas of research currently undertaken across the School to develop further and feed back into all parts of the architecture course.
- The bridging course is to be commended

### 10.3 Recommendations

10.3.1 The Board has made the following recommendations to the School. The RIBA expects the university to report on action taken or planned as a result of the recommendations in the annual monitoring returns submitted by the school, in the report requested under 8.1.iii above, and in the RIBA mid term review. Failure by the institution to act on the recommendations, or provide the RIBA with a clear rationale for not doing so, may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

10.3.2 The Board considered that whilst the course objectives were clear and valid, these were not being consistently achieved across all ateliers. In some cases, there was a lack of clarity in project briefs, and levels of ambitions in

learning outcomes unsuited to weaker students. The board recommends the school thoroughly review the academic offer at BA2 and BA3 (and part time equivalents) to ensure that academic themes and learning outcomes are clearly stated, sufficient for students to make an informed choice of atelier at both levels.

10.3.3 The Board considered that some atelier briefs in the final year were insufficiently substantial in terms of scale and complexity, and recommends that award level projects be developed to allow a more comprehensive approach to design.

10.3.4 The Board recommends the School puts in place systems to ensure all external examiners see the work of all final year students completed at BA2 (or part time equivalent) that contributes to the meeting of the criteria and the grade of degree offered at the award level.

10.3.5 To assist student success in the award year, the Board recommends the school puts in place assessment systems to ensure consistent standards of achievement at BA2 level.

#### 10.4 **Advice**

10.4.1 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:

10.4.2 The Board advises School or atelier leaders to monitor and analyse the variations in students' work to ensure that this consistently demonstrates the range of communication skills appropriate to professional activity.

## 11. **Commentary**

### 11.1 **Self-Appraisal and Developments since the last visit**

Since the last full Visiting Board in 2005 the School has consolidated its position at the Avery Hill campus. The School has enjoyed relative stability since the merger of two schools six years ago and the restructuring of administrative offices three years ago. Now the School hopes to be able to re-establish discipline identity and from that make greater strides in cross-discipline activity. The School is pleased with its progress in all fields to date, particularly at Part One and intends to continue this upward trend. Since the last visit, part-time and full-time routes have been integrated, which has had a positive impact on all students.

The University is clearly committed to architecture and to providing sufficient support to enable it to flourish. At the time of the last visit in 2004 and the mid-term visit in 2006, discussions were in progress about the development of a new building on the Avery Hill site. Since then the University has decided to build a new, fit for purpose building on the Greenwich Maritime site next to Sir Christopher Wren's, into which it is investing £40 million. It is intended that an iconic building, designs for which will be sought by international competition. The Board was pleased to note that the School is involved in all briefings. The anticipated delivery date for the new building is March 2012. In the meantime, the School has gained access to more room and staff at Avery Hill following the relocation of another department and the University continues to make improvements to the facilities at Avery Hill even though Architecture will not be housed there in the long term.

The Head of School is confident of the support architecture receives from the institution, in the interim arrangements and the proposals for space in the future. The Board was content that the interim arrangements were appropriate and was impressed that the University intended to continue making improvements to Avery Hill even though the School's location there is not permanent.

The School's ambition is to foster an international reputation and to be one of the top schools of architecture. The University shares the School's wish to expand student numbers, particularly at Part Two. It is hoped that this will be facilitated by the new facilities at the Maritime Campus.

The University's appointments policy for part-time staff has changed, and a considerable number of hourly-paid staff are now on fractional appointments.

## 11.2 **Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit**

The Board thanks the School and University for their kindness and hospitality during the visit. The Board is grateful to the staff and students for their constructive participation in the visit, openness and honesty in discussion and patience with the Board. The documentation was produced in a timely fashion and all practical arrangements worked well, particularly given the potential logistical difficulties that may have arisen from visiting two sites.

Portfolios were clearly labelled and easy to navigate. The Exhibition was well laid-out and greatly aided the Board in understanding the structure and ethos of the three programmes.

### 11.2.1 *Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit*

Full time and part time students are taught together in architectural design ateliers from part time year 2 onwards.

#### **BA (Hons) Architecture**

**Year 1 Part Time Route:** 2 lowest, 1 middle, 1 high from a cohort of 16.

Full time Year 1, Part Time Year 2: 6 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from a cohort of 108

**Full time year 2, Part time year 3:** the lowest pass from each of the nine ateliers, 2 middle from across the ateliers, 2 high from across the ateliers from a cohort of 94;

**Full time year 3, Part Time Year 4;** the lowest pass from each of the ateliers (9 ateliers), 2 middle from across the ateliers, 2 high from across the ateliers from a cohort of 104.

The School also provided a further selection of portfolios across the range of achievement were available in the base room.

#### **Part Two – Part time and full time students are taught together in four ateliers.**

**First Year full time year 1/part time year 1:** 1 each lowest/middle/high from each atelier (12 in total)

**Full time year 2 / part time year 2/3,** 1 each lowest/middle/high from each atelier (12 in total) from a cohort of 12.

#### **Part Three**

The work of all the candidates who submitted for examination in the academic year 2007/8 was made available– including that of those who were advised not to go forward for examination.

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

The recommendations of the 2004 Visiting Board were discussed at the mid-term monitoring visit in June 2006, at which it was seen that the School had made enormous progress and was responding positively and thoroughly to the recommendations and advice offered in 2004 and 2005. The present Board and External Examiners confirmed that the School takes an open and constructive view of external comments.

**11.4 Context of the courses within the wider provision of the school and Faculty.**

The School of Architecture and Construction was established following the merger of the former Schools of Architecture & Landscape and Land & Construction Management. In addition to the validated architecture programmes, the School offers programmes in a wide range of design-based and built environment disciplines, such as real estate, housing, construction, urban design, garden design, graphic design, surveying, landscape architecture and 3D digital design. This provides tremendous scope for cross-collaboration and interdisciplinary working of which, although not yet exploited to its full potential, the School wishes to take advantage.

**11.5 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part One qualification**

**11.5.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives**

The course objectives were clear and valid but, based on the evidence in the portfolios, the Board did not consider that they were entirely being achieved. Students received

appropriate information about what is to be assessed. However, weaker students evidently struggled to provide sufficient evidence that criteria had been met. Experiencing different ateliers over the two years, they were not able to demonstrate an improvement of design standards.

**11.5.2 Course design and content**

Full time and part time students are taught together in architectural design ateliers from part time year two onwards. The Board considered that the first year is good and stretches students. In particular, design and technology are strong. From the second year onwards, the programme is divided into ateliers. These are mixed ateliers containing both second and third year students. Students must change atelier between the second and third year. The final year project, while not designed as a compliance project in the degree, is intended to meet the criteria.

Before choosing ateliers, students receive presentations from each atelier in one day and vote for four in order of preference. A preliminary indication of the nature and themes is available prior to the presentations on the internet. The School tries to accommodate first choice, particularly at degree level; if this is not possible they are guaranteed one of their choices. Choice is usually directed by the themes of the projects, but students can be counselled as to choice of ateliers both before choosing and later if they believe they have not chosen appropriately. At both Part One and Part Two, staff try to ensure a healthy mix of students within ateliers.

The School intends that ateliers work to consistent parameters as all should meet the criteria, but providing

sufficient distinction to allow for richer variety. Briefs are mapped against the criteria and the learning profile mechanism is designed in such a way as to allow students to manage the criteria themselves, enabling staff and students to identify any deficiencies.

The Board found that student achievement through the ateliers could vary substantially from one to the other. The Board advises that the School may wish to review the intentions of each atelier.

The Board considered that whilst the course objectives were clear and valid, these were not being consistently achieved across all ateliers. In some cases, there was a lack of clarity in project briefs, and levels of ambitions in learning outcomes unsuited to weaker students. The Board recommends the school thoroughly review the academic offer at BA2 and BA3 (and part time equivalents) to ensure that academic themes and learning outcomes are clearly stated, sufficient for students to make an informed choice of atelier at both levels. Staff guidance for weaker students could be reviewed.

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

##### - *Design*

There is a need for consistency and coherence in the portfolios. Although the Board understood that all ateliers were intended to give students the opportunity to meet all criteria, it considered that ambition levels are too high for weaker students. This is exacerbated by an atelier system, particularly one in which students must join a new atelier before some have understood the aims and objectives of the previous one. The variation of responses to design

approach and level achievement in the ateliers was of concern to the Board, particularly at low pass level. Some of the ateliers provide a good basis for entering the Diploma. This was particularly evident at the top end of achievement at which opportunities and the students' response could be exciting. The achievement of the middle ranking students was adequate. The Board was encouraged by the maturity of the students.

The School should ensure students consistently meet all the criteria required to satisfy Part One: Design, particularly the need to demonstrate coherent architectural designs integrating knowledge of the ways that analysis, research, context, and the preparation and development of a brief influence a design proposal. The Board further considered that the School should ensure design work consistently demonstrated knowledge of the ways in which architectural histories and theories, and physical, artistic, and cultural contexts informed the design process. The Board believes that the conceptual ambition for the units is set out at the beginning of the year, but that there is a concern that this is not always carried through into the final resolution of the project, especially in the weaker students.

The Board considered that some atelier briefs in the final year were insufficiently substantial in terms of scale and complexity, and recommends that award level projects be developed to allow a more comprehensive approach to design.

##### - *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the BA (Hons)

Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Technology and Environment.

The Board considered that this area of the programme displayed some strong points. The Board was pleased that the School does not treat technology and design as discrete elements. The full range of sustainability issues is covered in all ateliers.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of cultural context.

The Board applauds the School's coverage of cultural context and the students' responses. The School's treatment of this is imaginative and it is integrated fully into the design approach. There are clear links with research activities which may be developed.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Communication.

The Board considered that, on the whole, drawings are appropriate to each atelier. The students' portfolios showed a wide range of aptitude and skills and the Board was pleased to see hand-drawing. Staff have been encouraging students (at both Parts One and Two) to make models since the last visit and have advised them of the best way in which to do this and record it within the limitations of the present studio arrangements.

Despite this there was some disparity in the level of communication skills. Some of the weaker folios were rather opaque and lacked narrative. There was no evidence of design development in some of the lower pass portfolios.

The Board advises that atelier leaders should be mindful that students need to demonstrate a range of communication skills that are appropriate for exploration and for professional use. Ateliers could draw on and develop students' existing skills. CAD is now being introduced in the first year and the Board looks forward to the benefits of this becoming apparent as the School strikes a balance between these forms of media, as the students progress through the School.

Students speak and write adequately.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture programme met all Part One criteria in the area of Management, Practice and Law.

The Board considered that this area of the criteria was well covered, being integrated into the programme from year one onwards. The School has good experience of teaching part-timers.

- Preparation for Professional Experience, (Part 1 only)  
Preparation for practice takes place during the third year of the BA. Students considered that they were well prepared. At present, students do not register with the University during the year out and the School is regretfully

no longer able to visit students in practice, except when there is a special need. However, the School ensures that the PSA is contactable and readily available. A short course is available at the School for year out students wishing to complete their PEDR.

11.5.4 Progression within the course

The Board learned from the Vice-Chancellor that the University was keen to improve progression rates. At Part One the levels of non-progression are considerable. The University has found it difficult to identify the precise reasons for this, although the Board noted particular progression issues between Year One to Year Two. The Board noted that progression could be variable. The Board shared the course team's and University's hope that progression rates could be improved.

11.5.5 Assessment:

An appropriate range of assessment methods is employed concomitant with (or tailored to) to the activity. The School is content that assessment is robust and appropriate and is confident in its marking and systems. However, the Board did have some concerns, considering that assessment and moderation processes might be unnecessarily burdensome.

The Board considered the assessment of second and third year students in the mixed ateliers. The third year mechanism is very rigorous, employing second marking and group discussion. The Board understood that outcomes at years two and three were different, as appropriate. It is expected that third year students will have covered more ground and reached a greater level of resolution and depth than second years on the same atelier. Second years receive a crit in their own year group

and are assessed according to different criteria from those at third year.

The Board was advised 'Future Cities, future practices' is finally assessed at Level 2. To assist student success in the award year, the Board recommends the School puts in place assessment systems to ensure consistent standards of achievement at BA2 level. External examiners do not see the second year work of the graduating third year cohort at the point of award but do see some of the current second year work to check standards. The Board considered that more attention should be given to the second year standard of achievement in order to make more robust the final examination procedures. The Board recommends the School establishes systems to ensure all external examiners see the work of all final year students completed at BA2 (or part time equivalent) that contributes to the grade of degree offered at the award level.

Despite the emphasis on assessment and moderation, the Board voiced some concerns about the lowest pass level and recommended that the School should implement systems to ensure that all students at lowest pass level consistently meet all Part One criteria.

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

The School is proud of the diversity of its intake. The Board applauded the University's commitment to widening participation. Admissions arrangements are varied, almost student-specific. The standard offer is for at least 240 UCAS tariff points or equivalent. The School has consciously decided against raising this in order to encourage diversity of intake.

A portfolio may be required if no art or design was taken at GCSE or A level. The School aims to interview as many candidates as possible to identify those with potential for the discipline not necessarily demonstrated through formal examination results. The School recognises that many students will need additional support and may take longer to complete, but is convinced that this is worth the additional effort and commitment.

The School's arrangements for direct entry were good and APEL procedures are appropriate. The University provided an analysis of entry qualifications for all programmes, demonstrating the wide variety of backgrounds.

The Board commended the bridging course, considering it an example of good practice which should be widely advertised.

## 11.6 Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Two qualification

11.6.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives  
The course objectives were clear and valid and demonstrably being achieved. The Part Two programme benefits from the participation of full time and part time students, who are now fully integrated.

11.6.2 Course design and content  
The Board considered that the structure of the Part Two programme is sensible and operates well for full-time and part-time students, who are now taught together four ateliers.

The programme aims to give students a strong foundation, underpinning their work with critical theory and history and sound technology. The School believes that the technical underpinning of the programme grows stronger year by year, aided by the contribution of visiting technical consultants.

Full-and part-time students meet in their ateliers on Wednesdays and full-time students also meet on Fridays. Cross atelier crits are held five times a year which give the students the opportunity to see and learn from each other's work. The School wishes to avoid creating silo approaches and hopes that the new building will contain sufficiently large studios to allow several ateliers to operate side by side.

The Board considered that there were overlaps of approach, research and collection of information between the ateliers and that thematic issues are not sufficiently articulated. Students are not responding to a theme in a particular way. The final design of the stronger diploma students' projects tend to thrive upon the initial processes of research and collection, but the weaker students seem a little distracted and delayed by the process and inevitably do not give themselves enough time to produce as rounded a final design as they should be capable of. Ateliers could be more strongly focussed, with a little more directed study.

The Board would expect the final design project to involve a more complex building brief and be more robust in addressing the part 2 criteria.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Design.

There are four separate ateliers. The ateliers are intended to be student-centred, affording students freedom to explore and to specialise in theory to a greater depth. The Board considered that the ateliers presented both benefits and drawbacks, in providing opportunity for greater depth of study, which might be adversely affected by weaker students. The Board appreciated the breadth of the Exhibition which gave ateliers the opportunity to demonstrate what were considered to be their essential differences and the potential for diversity of choice for students. However, the Board considered that three of them provide the students with a similar design experience. The Board considered that weaker students would be less able to identify and exploit the potential of each atelier. The Board advises the School to be mindful of the weaker students and consolidate the present ateliers before developing the course further.

The Board noted the absence of evidence of development methodology, demonstrating development from research to proposal.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Technology and Environment.

All students are required to produce a technical report. The Board found that this was achieved at an adequate level, although it could be prescriptive.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Cultural Context.

This is one of the strengths of the School and the Board commended the achievement of the students and the support they receive from academics. The School encourages students to demonstrate ability, knowledge etc of technical issues and design methodology. Students draw well, speak well and write adequately.

The Board considered that there could be more diversity of representation. The Board found that few sets of drawings made the distinction between presentation and representation within each portfolio.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Communication.

Students displayed ability with visual, verbal and written methods.

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios reviewed, the Board was satisfied that all graduates of the Diploma in

Architecture met all Part Two criteria in the area of Management, Practice and Law.

11.6.4 Progression within the course

The average pass rate over three years on the full-time route is 79.8% and, on the part-time route, 81.6%. The higher completion rates on the part-time route are noteworthy.

11.6.5 Assessment:

A wide range of assessment methods is used appropriate to the work being reviewed. There is both formative and summative assessment. The Board considered that work was heavily moderated and that feedback to students was thorough.

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

Applicants must hold a good honours degree in Architecture or equivalent and exemption from Part One, a relevant portfolio of work and normally at least 9 months' professional experience. An interview may be required.

The number of students entering the Greenwich Part Two from other institutions has risen from 31% to 45%. Over 50% of students are enrolled on the part-time route.

The Board considered that APEL procedures are appropriate. Students wishing to transfer into the final year from another prescribed school will have a portfolio review if the marks received at their former institution are of sufficient quality. Each direct entrant to Part Two is considered on a case-by-case basis.

11.7 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Three Qualification**

The Board considered that the programme is good and has clearly earned great respect from the candidates.

The majority of candidates come from Kent and Essex. Although there is a strong Greenwich contingent, an increasing number are graduates of other universities. The programme consciously aims to connect with the students' actual practice. Candidates spoke highly of the programme.

The Board considered that the Part Three pass rate was excellent. The School decides whether it is appropriate for a candidate to submit for examination. There are two examination sessions per year and if a candidate is deemed not ready – or feels that they are not prepared – they do not present for examination.

The Board was confident that all criteria were covered and met and that this would continue to be the case. However, the Board did have concerns about the recording of evidence. The Board noted that it is not necessary for all criteria to be met in the written work as the viva is intended to cover appropriate grounds. The programme documentation states that criteria are recorded against the written work, such as casework. However, on inspection of the written documents this was not apparent. In particular, the Board considered that project costing, resource planning and contract and procurement knowledge should be better evidenced. Staff, professional examiners and Part Three candidates confirmed that this did happen in practice. The Board had confidence in the highly experienced professional examiners appointed by

the School who would conduct a robust and thorough interview to establish that all criteria had been met. Although the Board had confidence that criteria were being met, it considered that the recording of the oral examination and seminars is weak and the School relies on the fact that professional examiners identify and interrogate apparent omissions and weaknesses in the oral examination.

The Board advises the School that students' work should include all the criteria as stated in the documents. The School cited issues of confidentiality which often arise as Part Three students' work often concerns live projects. Fictional scenarios are also used. The Board was content that robust discussions were held at call-back seminars and in the viva examinations.

The Board considered that the standard of the case study could be raised and that critical and analytical skills could be improved. The Fenwick diagrams were a good feature.

The Board noted that there is no External Examiner attached to the Part Three programme. The Board advises the course leaders to interrogate procedures for having an external examiner who has an independent overview of the process, which at present relies on the self-regulation of the professional examiners. Although the Board has confidence in the professionalism and expertise of the professional examiners, it considered appointing an External Examiner a matter of good practice.

#### 11.8 **External examining arrangements**

The School has attracted well-respected, committed and passionate External Examiners who are keen to encourage the ambitions of the School.

The Externals were happy with all external examining processes and procedures. External examiners are normally appointed for four years, after which their term of service may be extended by one more year. Their chief remit is to confirm whether marking undertaken internally falls within an appropriate range. The School is open to conversation and acts upon advice, constantly seeking to improve its processes. External examiners' are taken comments very seriously. Examiners enjoy good relationships with the architecture team and expressed particular support about history and theory teaching.

The Externals believed that the School has made great efforts to improve integration. Their chief criticism is that the School does not use the full range of marks at the upper end.

The Externals took a very positive view of the School's widening participation mission, although it adds to the challenge of their work as the range is so great, particularly in the dissertation. Ultimately it enriches and enlivens the course.

The progress of the part-time diploma was inspiring. It has settled in and developed well. The Externals believed that credit should be given to the School for the inspiring progress made in developing and integrating the part-time courses. The Externals are beginning to see similar positive developments with the Part One part-time route. In another positive development, Part One technology is also integrated into the design studio.

The Externals were supportive of the unit structure, believing that the units are beginning to utilise the

different backgrounds of the students in the School. The opportunity to see the work of those from different backgrounds increases the ambition of students and encourages them to try different ways of doing things. The Externals also considered that atelier activity could be counted as research; ateliers often attract very talented teachers and practitioners. The Externals believed that the atelier system should be encouraged and greater investment should be made in it.

Both School and Externals believe that the sampling system is adequate. All graduating diploma students are seen. At Part One, Externals saw samples of the second year work but did not meet individual students, the main focus being on the third year. All Externals have the opportunity to interrogate all portfolios including the lowest passes and all see students from each atelier. The Externals were confident that the threshold standard at Part One and at Part Two was appropriate.

The Externals believed that the standard has improved year on year and the reports of the present cohort would contain much that was positive. The mixture of second and third years in ateliers encourages the second years to greater and more ambitious effort. The Board was pleased to note the positive inputs from part-time students, who bring in experience and knowledge from practice.

The Board was keen to discuss parity of opportunity and assessment across the ateliers in the current cohort. The External examiners believed that it was important to have different ateliers but acknowledged the inherent difficulty in achieving parity. However, they believed that Greenwich was scrupulous about trying to achieve parity and that all students had the opportunity to meet the

criteria in all ateliers at Part One and Part Two. The Board was concerned about over-elaborate moderation but the Externals thought it was a result of the need for transparency and audit trails and was endemic in the modern university system. Work is marked by staff and mapped by students against the criteria. The School ensures that all ateliers hold cross-crits throughout the year and work is blind-marked by two people at the end of the year.

The Externals particularly wished to commend the impact of “Influences and theories” on the Diploma work. This has had a dramatic effect on students’ critical skills. The Externals are confident that students are now fully engaged and they would like to promote it as the intellectual powerhouse of the Diploma.

Part Three examiners were equally confident in processes. Candidates are well-prepared and the success rate is high. Relationships between students and employers are good.

The Externals were confident in the support that architecture received from senior University management. They were impressed with the facilities at Avery Hill and the commitment from the School to use the space effectively. The Externals believed that this helped foster the optimistic spirit in the School and the benefits of new and improved equipment were beginning to be seen.

The Board did not see much development work in the portfolios but apparently the Externals had seen evidence of process. Sketchbooks in the first and second year are marked and also used for design and history and theory.

The Board noted that sampling, which had been raised as an issue in earlier external examiners' reports, had improved. The Board had confidence in the Part Two and Three processes. However, the Board was not entirely convinced that the sampling process at Part One was sufficiently robust. At Part One, examiners had the opportunity to see all students but did not always avail themselves of it. The Board did not consider that its question about whether the Examiners were confident that all Part One criteria were met by all Part One graduates had satisfactorily been answered; hence the recommendation that External Examiners see second year work.

The Board noted that the standard and depth of written work has improved. History and theory and cultural context were commended in the diploma. Sustainability and technology were well integrated in the undergraduate programme.

The Board discussed whether the School's aim was parity or equivalence between ateliers. It appeared to the Board that they were aiming at equivalence and this was also raised by the external examiners.

**11.9 Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience**

All arrangements were appropriate. There is a dedicated Professional Studies Adviser who has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the teaching of professional studies in the School. All PEDR logsheets are sent to the PSA for counter-signature. Although it is not possible to visit all students in practice, the PSA is available for consultation by all students and students may take advantage of a short

course at the University during their year out between the degree and the diploma.

**11.10 Students**

The current SSR as calculated by the School is 1:16.

The Board was pleased to meet a wide range of students at a lively and informative meeting. Students participated actively in the discussion and volunteered information. The students' comments were almost entirely positive and any critical comments were made in the context of an understanding of the School's situation. The following reflects the main topics of discussion during the meeting.

Students were attracted to the programmes for various reasons. Location was a significant factor (both the Greenwich and Avery Hill campuses). The programme design and content, providing full and part time routes, were also attractive. The bridging course was commended. Recommendations by others and external perceptions of the School were also factors.

The programmes met students' needs and expectations. Students clearly understood the objectives of all courses. Students were active participants in the School and their views were heard. Staff were very supportive and accessible.

Students appreciated the choice of ateliers, the obligation to change ateliers between the second and third year and the mix of second and third years in each group. This was inspiring and created healthy competition. The integration of full-time and part-time routes was also a positive development.

There was unanimous endorsement of the Part Three. Part Three students enjoyed the approach and the camaraderie that developed amongst the cohort. Candidates considered that the programme prepared them very well for practice. Of particular value was the opportunity presented by the discussion workshops to learn from one another. Staff were willing to adapt the evening's agenda to topics students wish to discuss. It effectively operated as a network, attracting a wide variety of students and practices.

Students were generally appreciative of the facilities. It was clear that, while they enjoyed the opportunity to work on the Greenwich Maritime site, they retained great affection for the Avery Hill campus. The location of Avery Hill was seen as very positive for building a collegiate atmosphere among the student body and for aiding interaction between all the years on both full time and part time routes. The split sites could have their drawbacks as regards the transportation of drawings, models and sketchbooks. Moving and storage were issues of which the School was aware but students took a pragmatic view of this.

Students commented that as the studios were shared and closed early it was not possible for students to work late or to leave material there. The Board was advised by the School that the studios were open until 9pm. They would appreciate having a lockable room for models. Although the computer room is now also available on Sundays, longer opening hours would be welcome.

Although the integration of part-time and full-time routes had improved the experience of part-time students, some still felt they lacked a base. Some also voiced frustration at

the size of the workshops resulting in queues to use equipment, particularly given that they only had one day a week in which to use them.

The library service was praised, particularly the Avery Hill Library.

Students appreciated the input of the visiting technology specialists. There was some difference of opinion about the technology aspect of the programmes, some considering it improving, others enthusiastic in their praise of the staff and the workshop. Some however commented that with better materials and better access to the workshop they could achieve a better level of integration. At present they reported that they could only use wood and plastics.

The Board was impressed with the students' enthusiasm and their articulacy in expressing views.

#### 11.11 **Staff;**

The Board was pleased to meet a large number of the School's staff at an interesting and informative meeting. The meeting was particularly useful for discussing assessment values, learning outcomes and the atelier system. However, the Board would have encouraged a fuller and more inclusive discussion from the entire staff body.

The staff appreciated the great diversity within the School; of range of offer, staff and students. They were committed to the mission of widening participation and the University's international aspirations. Staff believed that the present diversity of expertise and experience among staff provided great potential interdisciplinarity within and

across ateliers and for realising the School's and University's ambitions.

Staff felt supported by the institution. Although reasonably content with present space, they were looking forward to the planned new building. They saw the projected move to Greenwich as a positive change and a driver to realising its aspirations and greater ambitions. They were also aware of the challenges it will present and the debate it will fuel about the School's identity as a London or a South East School.

Staff development procedures appeared to be appropriate. All recently appointed, including fractional staff, were given the opportunity to take the induction course. A key area assisting QA in architecture would be expanding opportunities for staff development.

The Board commended the School's policy of engaging external experts to deliver keynote lectures in technology. Finally, the Board noted that henceforth all new staff would be expected to engage in research.

#### **11.12 Research**

At present the School of Architecture and Construction houses four research groups in Sustainable Environments, Sustainable Buildings and Design.

The recently-appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise wishes to raise the profile of research while recognising and supporting the significant amount of teaching undertaken by architecture staff. 23% (11FTE) of full and part-time established staff in the School were engaged in research submitted to the RAE in the 2008 return.

The Board noted that a Director of Research and Enterprise was appointed in 2002. All newly appointed staff will be expected to engage with appropriate research enterprise, advanced professional practice and or/pedagogic or scholarly activity. Amongst current staff engaged under former procedures, research is implicit rather than explicit in their work. Team leaders will ensure that the balance between teaching and research is maintained.

Research and consultancy have developed over the last 10 years. There is a growing number of students enrolled on higher degrees and the School support staff who wish to embark upon or complete M.Phil or PhD programmes. The move to fractional appointments underpins the university's commitment to research. There is also research and scholarly activity.

Complementary to the University's intention to develop research at all levels, the School is trying to disseminate a culture of research into the studios. At present staff are happy with the way research feeds back in to the programmes. The number of professors has increased and all are engaged in teaching. The research groups considered that there may be some pilot projects in which students might be involved. There are existing models for teaching multidisciplinary subject areas at postgraduate level which might also be applied at undergraduate level. Diploma students are starting to see their work as research. They have established their own website on which to display their work

Whilst the Board appreciated that building a research profile is a gradual process, the Board considered that

there was too much separation between teaching and research. The Board believes that this is a missed opportunity, given the broad range of disciplines covered within the research and encourages the School to press for more inputs into the validated programmes.

**11.13 Equal Opportunities:**

The University has clear policies on equal opportunities. Its commitment to widening participation and success in that field is evident. The School provided the Board with a detailed analysis of the student body. The gender balance and ethnic diversity of students seem to fluctuate from year to year. The School has identified no discernable trend in the recruitment of female students. The gender balance amongst staff also fluctuates; this is ascribed to the composition of the team of part-time staff.

**11.14 Resourcing and facilities:**

Generally facilities are very good. The Board applauded the School's use of both sites for different purposes and the positive impact this had had on the students. The Board applauded the strategy of moving to the Greenwich site and the joint facilities it offered. This will create a single front door and showcase for architecture and construction. The Board noted that the School is soon to acquire additional permanent space in Queen Mary Court at Greenwich, which will be used until the new building is completed. The Board expressed the view that, whilst a new building would obviously be welcome to the academic community, expectations about this should be carefully managed.

Although the Board agreed with the institution that the relocation to the Greenwich Maritime Campus will be a positive and welcome development, the Board wished to

note that the Avery Hill site was loved and appreciated by the students, sometimes as the 'messy' space.

The use of the two sites (at Avery Hill and Maritime Greenwich) was welcomed by students and staff. This gives them a range of sites that they use to good effect. The facilities used by the students on a day to day basis are at Avery Hill. The students are inventive about using space available, including the library at Avery Hill. The informal spaces provided in the Avery Hill Library and ancillary spaces have become an essential source of accommodation for the students.

The School is addressing issues of access to the various facilities.

- *Studios*

The Board heard many positive comments about the drop-in nature of the studio at Avery Hill. There is a range of studio space available; the Board considered that studios are small for the numbers of students, but they are working cleverly and strategically. The studios are wireless and many students use their own equipment. Some students even appeared to have their own printers at home.

The Board noted that there were some issues with storage. Students must remove work at the end of a session and transportation of portfolios and models can be difficult. It is difficult for students to see each other's work as the studios must be cleared at the end of each session. However, they are able to see each other's work in crits and through regular exhibitions in the gallery. They also see each other's work in the workshop and the computer

laboratory, including the work of students on different degree programmes.

The staff presence in the studio is good. The Exhibition gallery is well-used and helps give students access to each other's work which otherwise may be more difficult given that all students cannot work together as much as they would like.

- *IT*

The students appeared to be content with IT provision as no major issues were raised. There is a specialised IT lab in the Tower building, including specialised plotter. There is also a 3D printer. This is a popular space and they would like more of it in the new building.

The Board noted that the School did not appear to have any environmental science modelling software. Ecotect is a minimum standard. As the School's USP is sustainability and they want to be at the cutting edge in this field, the Board considered that the School will need to invest in some software. There is also a 3D photocopier. There is also a dark room and stop-frame animation studios.

The Board noted the availability at Avery Hill of the TV studio and editing suite.

- *Workshops*

The workshops are not large; it is possible to have 16-20 students in the workshop at any one time, depending upon the activity. The students commented that they would appreciate more space in which to be messy and these sentiments are endorsed by External Examiners and Board alike. The School has recently acquired a laser cutter.

The Chatham campus houses environmental science laboratories. However, it appeared that many of the students were unaware that they were available.

- *Library*

Library provision is good. The main architecture collection is housed at Avery Hill, at which is based the Architecture and Construction, Education and Health and Social Care library. Its proximity to the studios and the quality of the collection ensures that the library is well-used. There is good lighting and large folio tables. Many of the students use the library at Avery Hill to work in as they cannot use the studios all the time. The library is used to work in as there is limited studio space/students have timed periods in the studios at Avery Hill. The Library was refurbished in summer 2007, creating different zones for different use.

The present collection comprises 105,700 books and pamphlets, 319 print journals on site and 5157 e-journals, accessible from all campuses. The Library subscribes to 103 journals in print and/or electronic format, increasingly exclusively the latter. The library subscribes to a wide range of databases available through the University of Greenwich Gateway. The trend in the budget has been maintained; at the time of the visit the Architecture library budget stood at £48,000. Acquisitions are made in close collaboration with staff.

Students undergo a three-stage induction. Special workshops are run as appropriate. Library opening times are 8.30am to 9pm Monday to Thursday, to 5pm on Friday, 10am-5pm on Saturday and now 11am-5pm on Sundays in response to student demand. Vacation opening hours are shorter. The Library also houses PC and

photocopying facilities. At Avery Hill there is also a slide library comprising 30000-40000 slides, which is currently being digitised.

## 12. Attachments

Prior to the visit the School provided all documentation as requested in the RIBA Validation Procedures.

An appropriate range of background and supportive documentation was provided in the Base Room.

## 13. Summaries of Previous Visiting Board Reports

13.1 The last full Visiting Board to the University of Greenwich took place on 10/11 June 2004. The Visiting Board recommended:

### Continued Validation of:

Part One: the University of Greenwich, Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Architecture), three years full-time, four years part-time

Part Three: the University of Greenwich, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice (formerly Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Architectural Studies), taken on completion of a minimum of two years practical training.

and

### Conditional Continued Validation of:

Part Two: University of Greenwich, Diploma in Architecture, two years full-time, three years part-time

The following conditions were applied to the Part Two programme:

Part Two: University of Greenwich Diploma in Architecture 2 years full-time or 3 years part-time

- i. The submission to the RIBA by the School, within three months of the receipt of this report, of a document demonstrating clearly the action the School will take to ensure that all graduates from the Part Two programme will meet all Validation Criteria no matter what combination of ateliers they pursue.
- ii. A visit to the School should take place following the summer 2005 assessment board by the Chair and two other member of the Board (one academic and one practitioner), to review the operation of mechanisms put in place to ensure that all graduates from the Part Two programme have met all Validation Criteria. This would be specifically to ascertain that the Part Two meets the criteria for Design, Technology and Environment. The Board would wish to see full academic portfolios for both years of the Part 2 course at lowest pass level for students who have studied all possible combinations of ateliers.

“10.1 The School has experienced significant change since the last Visiting Board in 2000 to the then School of Architecture and Landscape. In 2001 the School of Landscape and Construction merged with the School of Land and Construction Management to form the School of Architecture and Construction. As part of a plan to consolidate the university on three sites, the new School moved in summer 2002 from its former site in Dartford to the University's Avery Hill campus. The current Head of

School took up his post in July 2002. Change continues with the University moving from a semester based course structure to one based on three terms per academic year in September 2004. The Board was reassured that the School was successfully managing these changes and working hard to minimise the inevitable impact on students.

- “10.2 The School is working hard to capitalise on its new location and its closer proximity to London and is also exploiting the availability of the University's Greenwich Maritime campus for crits, events and exhibitions. The School is also commended for the efforts it is making to develop new linkages with the other disciplines based at the Avery Hill campus.
- “10.4 The School's strengths include:
- a very committed staff team, containing a good balance of full-time and part-time members;
  - excellent staff-staff and staff-student communication;
  - good accommodation and facilities including an excellent workshop, a very well-equipped photographic darkroom and good IT facilities;
  - the strong commitment in design teaching to experimentation and exploration
  - the excellent Management Practice and Law teaching throughout the School culminating in a strong Part Three further strengthened by the newly introduced structure.
- “10.5 The Visiting Board has made the following recommendations. The RIBA expects the Institution to report on action taken or planned as a result of the recommendations in the annual monitoring returns submitted by the school and in the mid term review. Failure by an Institution to act on the recommendations,

or provide the RIBA with a clear rationale for not doing so, may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

- “10.5.1 The Board recommends that the School re-examine the balance between research work (i.e. that of the students: the investigatory work undertaken for a project) and final design work in the second and final year of the Part One programme. The Board felt that a number of portfolios in both years, not always at the lowest pass level, failed to display an appropriate balance between background research and final design work with wide-ranging research work being seemingly at the expense of the achievement of well resolved design outcomes.
- “10.5.2 The Board recommends that the School looks again at the mechanisms via which it required its Part One students to demonstrate the integration of technology and environment into design work to ensure greater consistency across the atelier units.
- “10.5.3 The Board was confident that the decisions made by the School's Part One assessment boards have ensured that all graduates meet all validation criteria. Nevertheless, for the avoidance of doubt, the Board recommends that the School follow the recommendation of the University's Director of Learning & Quality, by introducing school regulations on compensation which override the standard university procedures.
- “10.6 The Visiting Board offers the following advice to the Institution on desirable, but not essential improvements, which it is felt would assist course development and/or raise standards:

“10.6.1 Particularly at Part One level, the Board was concerned that inappropriate assumptions were being made by the School about the background and capabilities of its part-time students. The School is advised to undertake a more detailed audit of the knowledge and skills of its part-time recruits and to target additional support based on the findings.

“10.6.2 The School is advised to reconsider the balance of group and individual work in the earlier years of the Part One course with a view to ensuring that students are better prepared for the major individual project undertaken in the final year.

“10.6.3 The School is advised either:

- to restructure its part-time Part One provision to operate atelier units that combine full-time and part-time students (as at Part Two) or
- to revisit the project briefs for the part-time atelier to ensure greater comparability with those set for the full-time ateliers.

### 13.2 Revisiting Board

The Revisiting Board took place on 20 June 2005. The Revisiting Board recommended:

#### Continued Validation of:

Diploma in Architecture (Part 2) 2 years full-time or 3 years part-time.

This was accepted by the RIBA Education Committee on 12 October 2005 and the condition discharged.

#### 13.2.1 Summary of June 2005 Revisiting Board Report:

“The last full Visiting Board to the University of Greenwich took place on 10/11 June 2004. The Board recommended unconditional continued validation for Part One: the University of Greenwich, Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Architecture), and Part Three: the University of Greenwich, Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Practice. Their findings are described in greater detail in section 11 (below) and are published on the RIBA website at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com). The remit of the 2005 Revisiting Board was strictly to consider the Part 2 course [...].

“The Revisiting Board congratulates the School on its positive and energetic response to the 2004 Visiting Board report. The response is the more impressive as the School has only had one year in which to address the issues raised. The School has also succeeded in preserving the breadth of choice offered by the ateliers.

“The Board appreciates that this is a developing process and has every confidence that the new mechanisms in place will ensure that improvements are sustained and enhanced.

“The difference in the standard and presentation of work, compared with the 2004 visit, was positive and encouraging. The Revisiting Board found a new energy in the School and a greater sense of purpose and direction. The School benefits from enthusiastic and committed staff, a good range of facilities and the support of the University.

“The Board thanks the School for its hospitality during the visit and the willingness with which staff discussed developments over the last year, and the readiness with which they produced additional information at short

notice. The Board wishes the staff every success in the continuing development of the School.”

**13.2.2 Recommendations 2005**

“10.2.2 The Board recommends that the School continue its good work of the last 12 months. The new measures appear to be having a positive effect and the Board is confident this will be sustained.

**13.2.3 Advice 2005**

“The Board commends the School on the diversity of experience offered by the range of ateliers. They believe however that some are more likely to lead to resolutions which successfully address all criteria than others. The Board advises the School that, when reviewing current ateliers or developing new ones, they need to consider carefully the focus of the atelier, in order to retain greater control of its remit and direction.

“The School confirmed that all units must be passed and compensation is not permitted. The Board advises the School to state explicitly its rules regarding the trailing of credits in its academic regulations, to ensure that all students are fully aware of them.”