

Royal Institute of British Architects

**Confirmed Report of the RIBA
Visiting Board to the University of
Huddersfield**

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee 19 March 2008

**Department of Architecture
School of Art, Design and Architecture**

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (International), Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (Smart Design), Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (Urban Design), Part One
Diploma in Architecture, Part Two
Diploma in Architecture (International) Part Two
Examination in Professional Practice (MArch) Part Three
Master of Architecture, International, Part Three
Certificate of Professional Practice in Architecture, Part Three

Date of Visiting Board: 11/12 October 2007

1. Information About the Courses

- 1.1 **Courses offered for revalidation:**
BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (International), Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (Smart Design), Part One
BA (Hons) Architecture (Urban Design), Part One
Diploma in Architecture, Part Two
Diploma in Architecture (International) Part Two
Examination in Professional Practice (MArch) Part Three
Master of Architecture, International, Part Three
Certificate of Professional Practice in Architecture, Part Three
- 1.2 **Address of the Institution where the courses are delivered**
Department of Architecture
School of Art, Design and Architecture
University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield HD1 3DH

T: 01484 422288
F: 01484 516151
W: www.hud.ac.uk
- 1.3 **Name of Awarding Body**
University of Huddersfield
- 1.4 **Name of Head of School**
Mr Richard Fellows

2. Membership of the Visiting Board

- 2.1 The members of the RIBA Visiting Board for the visit on 11/12 October 2007.
- James Soane (Chair)
Judi Farren-Bradley (Vice-Chair)
Professor Don Gray
Carol Norton
Sandy Halliday (co-professional/member)
Jaymeni Patel (Graduate/student)
Geoff Miller (RIBA Regional Representative)
- Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk (Validation Co-ordinator, RIBA) was in attendance as Secretary to the Board.
- David Gloster (Director of Education, RIBA) attended the Board as an observer.

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.

4. Recommendations of the Visiting Board to the Royal Institute of British Architects Education Committee 19 March 2008.

4.1 The Visiting Board recommends to the Education Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects Continued Validation of

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One
 BA (Hons) Architecture (International), Part One
 BA (Hons) Architecture (Smart Design), Part One
 BA (Hons) Architecture (Urban Design), Part One
 Diploma in Architecture, Part Two
 Diploma in Architecture (International) Part Two
 Examination in Professional Practice (MArch) Part Three
 Master of Architecture, International, Part Three
 Certificate of Professional Practice in Architecture, Part Three

4.2 The next Visiting Board will take place in 2011.

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

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

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

5.3 The Visiting Board recommends to ARB that the Part 1 & 2 courses met all points of the EU Directive.

6. Criteria for Validation

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

7. Standards

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

8. Conditions of Validation

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

9. Standard Requirements of Recognition

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 Huddersfield is an inclusive university offering higher education to those who will benefit most. This philosophy is embraced by the School of Architecture which wishes to remain inclusive while encouraging ambition and promoting excellence. The Board believes that ambition of the students could be encouraged yet further by encouraging links with other departments within the university.

10.2 The School's strengths include:

- Tremendous support at university senior management level from the new Dean and new Vice-Chancellor. The confidence in and commitment to Architecture is expressed in its inclusion in the new name of the School. This will increase the visibility and profile of the Department. The University's commitment is also demonstrated by the significant investment in facilities, most notably the new Creative Arts building.

- A close-knit community providing an intimate, supportive school which fosters good relationships between staff and students.
- The diverse range of students and the commitment to making architecture accessible
- Good links with local practice
- Its location in a School of Art and Design and proximity to related disciplines and excellent facilities, of which the school should take more advantage.
- The vibrancy in the overall environment.
- The library facilities, including the in-house Technical Reference Bureau and the main University Library.
- The excellent model-making facilities.

10.3 Recommendations

10.3.1 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 recommendations may result in a course being conditioned by a future Visiting Board.

10.3.2 The Board recommends that the School clarifies its procedures on the briefing of External Examiners and their role, and the mechanism for the School to take forward and further respond to the advice and suggestions of External Examiners.

10.3.3 While the Board recognises that there have been significant changes and improvements to the coverage and delivery of cultural context, the Board recommends that

the School continue to encourage students to synthesise cultural context into their thesis projects at Part One.

10.3.4 The Board expressed reservations about editorial decisions made by students when assembling their portfolios. The Board recommends that the School issue clear advice about what constitutes a full academic portfolio

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 development and/or raise standards;

10.4.2 The Board advises the School to encourage students to explore critical techniques of representation.

10.4.3 The Board advises that the School review the teaching of CAD in Part One to ensure adequate levels of skill at lowest pass level.

10.4.4 The Board would encourage students to explore working methods evident in other departments within the faculty, noting that there is a parallel course in computer graphics in the department.

10.4.5 The Board was disappointed that students' overseas visits were not properly documented in the portfolios at Part One. The Board advises that Part One students keep journals and other documentary evidence of overseas trips which would greatly enhance the portfolios.

10.4.6 The Board advises the School to review the role of the Part One dissertation with regard to the criteria, to ensure a greater level of cultural content.

10.4.7 The Board advises that students might be requested to consider producing a project report (this is especially important when considering overseas locations where different requirements apply).

10.4.8 The Board believes the School should explore and encourage further critical practice in its broader sense, in the light of the Part Three programme being Masters or Masters (International).

10.4.9 The Board advises the School to review its assessment procedures to ensure that student projects are graded according to the full range of marks available.

10.4.10 The Board advises the School that the procedures for degree classification are kept under review.

11. **Summary of Previous Visiting Board Reports**

11.1. The last full Visiting Board to consider the Part One and Part Two awards at the University of Huddersfield took place on 20/21 March 2003. The Visiting Board recommended that Continued Validation be awarded to:

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

BA (Hons) in Architecture (International) (three years, full-time)

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

Diploma in Architecture (International) (two years, full-time)

The last Visiting Board to consider the Part Three awards took place on 15 June 2004. The Visiting Board recommended Continued Validation of:

University of Huddersfield, Master of Architecture, Part Three, one year part-time

University of Huddersfield, Master of Architecture (International), Part Three, one year part-time

University of Huddersfield, Certificate of Professional Practice in Architecture, Part Three, one year part-time

11.2 Summary of the Previous Visiting Board Reports

11.2.1 Summary of the Part One and Part Two Visiting Board, 20/21 March 2003:

The Department's strengths included a highly committed and supportive staff and an enthusiastic and confident student body. The Board found that the courses within the Department had a number of strengths.

The Board found that the BA (Hons) in Architecture and BA (Hons) Architecture (International) courses met the Criteria for Validation at Part One. Through its examination of the portfolios, discussions with staff, students and external examiners, the Board found that the

lowest pass standards for both courses were appropriate and that the non-design elements of the course were integrated with the design output. The Board found evidence at all levels, of both courses, of an adequate engagement of site and context in the design work. In addition, the Board found that within the design work an adequate ability to deal with the three-dimensional was evident. The Board found that the coverage of construction and technology was appropriate. The Board found that there was a focus on sustainability within the courses, which was a strength of the Department. Although adequate, the Board found that the range and scope of the design projects could be improved to raise the level of ambition within the course. The Board also found that although the coverage of History and Theory was appropriate at this level, the Department may wish to explore further ways of allowing students to engage in the debate of contemporary theory and integrate this more fully into the design modules.

The Board found that the Diploma in Architecture and the Diploma in Architecture (International) courses met all of the Criteria for Validation at Part 2. In addition, the Board found that the standards of the design work were appropriate at the threshold pass levels for both courses. The Board found that the design work of both courses demonstrated a sufficient understanding of the design process. The Board found evidence through its examination of the portfolios, that there was an adequate synthesis between the design and non-design components. Although adequate, the Board did recommend that the Department may wish to consider improving the integration of History and Theory and Construction (particularly within the International course), Structures and Architectural Technologies with the design work. The

Board also recommended that the level of critical analysis could be raised. As a Part 1, the Board found that the coverage of the technology of sustainability was a strength of the courses. The Board found that students made an effective use of models at this level.

Through discussion with the Departmental staff and the Dean, the Board learned that the Department would like to merge the International courses with the Home courses at BA (Hons) and Diploma level, offering the International element as an option rather than a named award. The Visiting Board supported this aim and would encourage the Department to initiate this change.

The Board found that the Department was well supported and benefited from some excellent resources, including a well-run Technical Reference Bureau of a very high quality, IT and Library facilities.

11.2.2 Summary of Part Three Visiting Board Report, 15 June 2004

“The Part Three course at Huddersfield University is linked to the University's Part Two course to form an MArch qualification although a Certificate of Professional Practice in Architecture is available as an alternative Part Three qualification for graduates from other schools. The programme has strong support from both the Department and the School.

“The strengths of the Huddersfield Part Three include:

- the impressive level of care and attention devoted to individual candidates;
- the commitment to visit all candidates in their practices;

- well developed links with local practices;
- excellent support provided to the course by a strong team of professional and external examiners.

“The Visiting Board recommends that the course team provides an opportunity within the intensive programme for more engagement with contextual issues relevant to architectural practice in the 21st century such as PFI, partnering, masterplanning, project management etc. The booklist and course materials should also be updated to support this.

“The Visiting Board advises that the format for the external examiner's report might be modified. The aim would be the production of a report, based on those produced by each of the professional examiners, which would provide the Department with a broad overview of the operation of the programme, its strengths and weaknesses and a commentary on possible means for further strengthening the course.

“The Visiting Board advises the course team to provide better support and guidance for weaker candidates to encourage them to produce case studies which are less descriptive and more reflective and self-critical.

“The Visiting Board advises the course team to look again at both examination papers. In general the papers were of an appropriate standard and content. The Board found, however, that two questions out of the twenty on the 2003 short answer paper one were straightforwardly factual and rather trivial. The Board also advises that at least one question of paper two might require an open ended response which involves reflection on aspects of modern architectural practice.”

12. Details of the Conditions in Item 8.

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

13. Commentary

13.1 **Self-Appraisal and Developments since the last visit**
 Since the last visit the School has been restructured and rebranded, which is intended to improve the balance and create better opportunities for links and synergies between subject areas. The most welcome and significant development for Architecture is the inclusion of its name in the formal title of the School, now the School of Art, Design and Architecture. This is testament to the new Dean's and new Vice-Chancellor's support of and confidence in Architecture and their wish to raise its profile.

The critical self-appraisal would have benefited from a more in depth self- analysis, but did outline the philosophy of the courses. The Critical Self-Appraisal did not provide much indication of how architecture and related disciplines in the School are working together. The Board learned that it had been difficult to engineer formal collaborations, but in practice the Department believed that cross-fertilisation does take place Students also provided their own candid appraisal. Overall the document read well and was helpful to the Board in their understanding of the Department and its context.

The School and University believe that one of the strengths of the school of architecture is that it offers

architecture from foundation level to Part Three and has forged very strong and active links with local practice.

At the time of the last Visiting Board the School was anticipating making a professorial appointment. In the event a Visiting Professor was appointed and the School plans to place a bid for one of the twenty recently-announced professorships. It is anticipated that any such appointment will cover the broad spectrum of provision, supporting the School's mission and strategy in global and sustainable design rather than purely architecture. This may also widen the theoretical base of student work. Although professorships will be assigned to particular schools, it is intended that the benefits will be universal.

There have been no significant changes to the Part Two or Part Three programmes. In September 2004 the School introduced new variants to its existing BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One programmes, creating the BA (Hons) Architecture (Smart Design) and BA (Hons) Architecture (Urban Design) pathways. However it was subsequently agreed that these areas were sufficiently covered in the established Part One programmes and probably more appropriately covered as a unit at Part One and specialisms at Part Two. The separate named awards have been discontinued.

13.2 **Documentation and Arrangements for the Visit**

While most arrangements worked very well, the Board had to request additional evidence in the portfolios. In the meetings with staff, students and External Examiners the Board learned that more work, including developmental work, was produced in a variety of media, but this had not been retained in the portfolios for the visit. The Board

was pleased to learn that the School was now actively encouraging students to record their developmental work.

All other arrangements were excellent and the Board thanks the staff and students for their kind hospitality, their candour and helpfulness.

13.2.1 *Record of Academic Portfolios sampled during the visit*

The School provided:

BA1 (all pathways) 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high passes from a cohort of 65.

BA2 (all pathways) 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from a cohort of 70.

BA3: BA Hons: i. Architecture - 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from a cohort of 19; ii. International - 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high; from a cohort of 26; Smart Design – No graduates; Urban Design – 1 portfolio from a cohort of 1.

Diploma in Architecture & Diploma in Architecture (International) Year 4 (both pathways) 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from combined cohorts of 34.

Diploma in Architecture Year 5: 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from a cohort of 15.

Diploma in Architecture (International) Year 5: 3 lowest, 2 middle, 2 high from a cohort of 14.

Part Three: 3 lowest, 2 middle and 2 high passes from a cohort of 13.

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

The School has clearly made progress in responding to the recommendation of the 2002 and 2003 Visiting Boards; however there is still scope for further improvement. The Board considered that issues at Part One were being addressed.

The 2007 Board reiterates the recommendation of the 2002 Visiting Board that “the Department may wish to consider improving the integration of History and Theory and Construction (particularly within the International course), Structures and Architectural Technologies with the Design work.”.

The Board was encouraged by the simplification of awards since the last Visiting Board (namely the decision to retain the International awards at both Part One and Part Two but discontinue the Urban Design and Smart Design awards at Part One).

The 2007 Board noted the 2003 Part Three Board’s comments that, while candidates were strong, aspects of the course should be reviewed, in particular the recommendation that the course team ‘provide an opportunity within the intensive programme for more engagement with contextual issues such as PFI, partnering masterplanning, project management etc.’ The 2007 Board advises the School to continue to review the contemporaneousness of course content.

The External Examiners confirmed that reports were taken seriously and recommendations acted upon.

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

Architecture is housed within the recently-created School of Art, Design and Architecture, which is divided into three departments; The Department of Art, the Department of Design and the Department of Architecture and 3D Design. The School offers programmes in 3D design (Product and Transport), Construction, Creative Imaging, Design Business, Fashion Design, Fine Art, Interdisciplinary Art and Design, Interior Design and Exhibition, Multimedia Design, Textile Crafts and Textile Design.

In addition to the validated programmes, the Department of Architecture and 3D Design also offers Architectural and Interior Design Foundation programme, Architectural Technology (with separate pathways in Conservation, Smart Design) Architectural Technology and Interior Design, an MA in Architecture, an MSc in Sustainable Architecture and a Heritage Design BA. The foundation course also admits students interested in interior design. There is shared teaching. The School is hoping to establish more formal links between disciplines in the future.

The University is investing £14 million in the new creative arts building which will house fashion, creative imaging, multimedia, business design and music and music technology. Although Architecture itself will not move in, it will gain more space in its present building and also have exhibition space in the new building. It is due for completion in summer 2008.

13.5 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part One qualification:** Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture; BA (Hons) Architecture (International); BA (Hons)

Architecture (Smart Design), BA (Hons) Architecture (Urban Design)

13.5.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives
The aims for all Part One programmes are clearly articulated in the programme documentation and demonstrably being achieved.

13.5.2 Course design and content
All Part One courses are year-based programmes structured on a modular framework. A significant number of modules at Part One (particularly in the first year) are shared with BSc (Hons) Architectural Technology. The named variants to the pathway are introduced in the second year and students also receive guidance about their choice of pathway in the third year. In the third year students may also choose either the Special Study or Dissertation, depending on whether their approach is technical or practical or more theoretical. The choice of theme is usually relevant to the named specialism the student is pursuing in the third year. The dissertation in the third year was introduced two years ago. The External Examiners reported that this had been a steep learning curve which was now paying dividends.

Course design is constantly evolving and, in the Board's opinion to the better, with the decision to discontinue recently established new pathways. The Smart Design and Urban Design pathways were essentially similar to the existing courses, but allowed for a degree of specialisation in the third year through specific modules, dissertation or special study themes and design. These themes were introduced in the second year and students focussed on their chosen route in the third year. At the time of the visit the Board learned that the School had decided to

discontinue these two routes at Part One, as the themes they covered were already integrated into the BA (Hons) Architecture and BA (Hons) Architecture (International). It was decided that they would be more appropriately treated as specialisms at postgraduate level.

This decision demonstrates the maturity of the School and its responsiveness to situations.

In the third year students choose the Advanced Architectural Studio Comprehensive Design project which determines which award is achieved (BA (Hons) Architecture, Architecture (International), Architecture (Smart Design) or Architecture (Urban Design)).

Students on the International programme undertake month-long study trips outside the EU (for example Vietnam and China). Students on the BA (Hons) Architecture programme study comparable sites in the UK or in mainland Europe (for example Graz). Groups of students going overseas comprise a mixture of Part One and Part Two students. The School ensures that there is parity of opportunity and experience in all routes.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirms that all graduates of all Part One validated programmes met the Part One criteria in the area of Design.

The Board considered that the design outcomes in the first and second year were modest, but had improved by the third year. It would encourage to school to review its

programme and teaching methodology, perhaps offering students a more ambitious framework to engage with.

The Board recognises how central the long visits to other countries are to the School. In discussions with the Board, the students were able to speak articulately about their experiences and the influence on work, however the Board was disappointed that these experiences either had not translated into design work or evidence had not been retained.

The Board expressed reservations about editorial decisions made by students when assembling their portfolios. The Board recommends that the School issue clear advice about what constitutes a full academic portfolio

The Board advises that Part One students keep journals and other documentary evidence of overseas trips which would greatly enhance the portfolios.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirms that all graduates of all Part One validated programmes met the Part One criteria in the area of Technology and Environment.

The Board considered that Part One provides a good grounding in technology and environment. However, the Board noted that contemporaneity of case studies could be improved and that a greater level of integration could be achieved, particularly among weaker students. The contributions of the Visiting Professor are clearly an important fixture in the school curriculum and students benefit greatly from his visits.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirms that all graduates of all Part One validated programmes met the Part One criteria in the area of Cultural Context.

The Board found that coverage of this area, as far as inputs are concerned, was extensive. It is delivered by many lecture courses, complemented by an exhaustive reading list. Although the third year dissertation is called Art and Design, in practice students can cover a variety of themes. Students are now required to begin considering their dissertations over the summer between second and third year. The External Examiners commented that this seems to have helped improve quality. The Board found that there was a lack of clarity in what constituted third year level research in a cultural theory context. The Board found it difficult to establish the School's attitude to teaching cultural context, as, although the inputs were good, it was difficult to pinpoint evidence of learning outcomes within project work and would encourage a critical dialogue between the students' written work and design work. The Board advises the School to review the role of the Part One dissertation with regard to the criteria, to ensure a greater level of cultural content.

While the Board recognises that there have been significant changes and improvements to the coverage and delivery of cultural context, the Board recommends that the School continue to encourage students to synthesise cultural context into their thesis projects at Part One.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirms that all graduates of all Part One validated

programmes met the Part One criteria in the area of Communication.

Students cover a range of communication skills at Part One. However, the lack of substantial evidence of international visits and related events in the portfolios is an issue that needs to be addressed. The Board learned that the students do a lot of model making but this was not clear within the portfolios.

How students represent and communicate their experience of international contexts and how it has influenced their work needs to be reviewed. The Board learned, from discussion with students and staff, that there was a substantive amount of additional work in this area which was not reflected in the portfolios. The Board, echoing comments by the External Examiners, believes that students should be encouraged to include this in their process work. The Board recommends that more attention should be paid to teaching students what constitutes a comprehensive academic portfolio and the role of portfolios in helping students to provide evidence.

The Board considered that methods of communications appear to narrow down by the third year. The Board advises that the School review the teaching of CAD in Part One to ensure adequate levels of skill at lowest pass level.

The Board believes that students should be encouraged to maintain different methods of communication. The Board learned from conversations with staff and students that a wide variety of media were used, including the making of videos, but little of this had been provided in the portfolios or elsewhere. The Board considered that

students do not seem to be fully exploiting the excellent resources available to them.

The Board advises the School to encourage students to explore critical techniques of representation. The Board would encourage students to explore working methods evident in other departments within the faculty, noting that there is a parallel course in computer graphics in the department.

The Board noted that many students seemed not to fully engage in the physical context of their projects, which is particularly important when located abroad, and would encourage more detailed observations and recordings within the students' design work.

- Management Practice & Law

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirms that all graduates of all Part One validated programmes met the Part One criteria in the area of Management, Practice and Law.

The chief vehicle for this is the compulsory third year Professional Studies module, delivered by a series of lectures and assessed by examination and portfolio review. It appears to be somewhat detached from the rest of the course and the Board believed that there was greater scope for integration with other areas.

- Preparation for Professional Experience, (Part 1 only)

The Board found that the students were adequately prepared for their year in practice; in discussion with the students the Board learned that they felt well-prepared, confident and well-supported when embarking on their year out.

The 'Professional Experience Year Out module (year four) is an integral part of the course and compulsory for those wishing to take Part Two at Huddersfield. Students are prepared for this by the Practical Training Module which begins in March/April of the third year. This complements the Professional Studies module. Students are helped in their search for suitable work by the School's good links with practice.

Students are expected to maintain contact with the Professional Training Adviser and submit PEDR sheets for signing at the required intervals. They must also prepare a 2000 word Case Study of a project of which they have gained first hand experience, which is assessed with the PEDR sheets at the end of year. A recall day is held annually in February and a review and feedback session at the end of the year. Students are visited in their practices only when necessary or at the request of the student or the practice.

13.5.4 Progression within the course

The Board noted that statistics revealed a significant number of referrals. This was also commented on by the External Examiners. The Board concurred with the views of the External Examiners. Recently retention and progression rates have been disappointing, which the School has ascribed partly to the nature of the intake and partly to the growing financial burden on students. The School normally expects 80% of first years and 90% of second years who complete the year to progress to the next stage. The university provides academic and careers guidance and support for students who are referred or need to repeat a year.

The School is confident that retention, progression and completion rates will stabilise.

The Board anticipates that the School will take a clear view in the forthcoming debate about assessment, referral and review periods. The final assessments presently take place in May, with resits in July but it is proposed that this might change so that resits are undertaken in September.

13.5.5 Assessment:

Students understood the existing assessment process well and considered that they were given clear guidance.

The School uses a variety of teaching and assessment methods, crits, seminars, groupwork, external tutors, each of which are appropriate to the activity under consideration. In order to recognise the progress of students more appropriately, the Board suggest that the School might reconsider the weighting of the second year in order to recognise those who have made good progress in the third year.

The Board encourages the pursuit of excellence and encourages the School to use the full range of marks. The potential for students to do well should be increased and marking should be undertaken to the students' advantage.

The Board advises the School to review its assessment procedures to ensure that student projects are graded according to the full range of marks available.

The Board advises the School that the procedures for degree classification are kept under review.

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

The Board applauded the Foundation course and the way in which the School and University have embraced widening participation. About 15 students annually enter the Part One degree programmes from the Foundation course. Although the standard offer at the time of the visit was 240 points, the School considers a wide range of qualifications for entry. The School also has the discretion to admit, exceptionally, students whose qualifications do not confirm to the standard requirements. Evidence of creative ability is considered a good indicator of potential and all candidates are interviewed with portfolio or other evidence of creative activity. 67 students were enrolled in the first year of Part One in 2006/2007. The target intake is 63.

There are clear APEL procedures for students wishing to enter at a later stage of the course; each case is considered on individual merits. Direct entry into the third year is permitted in accordance with APEL procedures including an interview and portfolio review. If appropriate they may be required to undertake an additional 20 credit Foundation or Intermediate level module. Applications from mature or overseas students are encouraged and considered on an individual basis.

The Board noted that students had rather varied entry qualifications. The entry tariff at the time of the visit was 240. The Board was welcomed the School's decision to raise the entry tariff at Part One, probably to 300 points. The School anticipates that this will contribute to the raising of standards.

13.6 **Detailed Commentary on the Course leading to Part Two qualification: Diploma in Architecture / Diploma in Architecture (International)**

13.6.1 Clarity, validity and achievement of course objectives
Course objectives are clear and valid and demonstrably being achieved. A sense of social context and environment is intended to inform the approach and underpin all activity, while allowing scope for diversity of response.

13.6.2 Course design and content
The Diploma course is delivered over two years on a modular basis. The pathways are differentiated by the choice of 40-credit Urban Design and Architecture in the first year (Integrated Urban Design and Architecture or International Integrated Urban Design and Architecture) and, most significantly, by the second year dissertation (carrying 40 credits) and Design Thesis (carrying 60 credits). Both diploma programmes contribute significantly (for Huddersfield graduates) to the Master of Architecture (Part Three).

In general, the Board praised the quality of the dissertations. However there is an issue of balance if students are more theoretically or structurally inclined; for example, they may sometimes cover technology themes and sometimes cultural context. This allows students to weight their learning in a certain direction, which should be balanced elsewhere in the curriculum to ensure that all aspects of the criteria are covered.

The Board advises the School to review the role of the dissertation with regard to the criteria.

The Board considered that weaker students needed more guidance on developing their own briefs and identifying sites in order to be able to engage earlier in confident designs. The Board was not able to find the criteria with which students selected international sites.

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

- *Design*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture and Diploma in Architecture (International) met the all Part Two criteria in the area of design.

Students are given clear briefs in the fourth year which are generally sufficiently robust. However the Board considered that some sustainability projects seemed weak and the students did not fulfil the potential of the brief. The Board advises that the School ensure projects are underpinned with sufficient intellectual and academic support.

In the fifth year high level passes the Board found that the quality of visual presentation was high. The best students are clearly able to integrate theory into their dissertations and design work. The Board also noted that the models were sophisticated and apposite.

- *Technology & Environment*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture and Diploma in Architecture (International) met the all Part Two criteria in the area of technology and environment.

Given the amount of emphasis the School places on this, the Board found that the level of experimentation was conservative and would have expected to find more detailed exploration. It tended to appear in the form of information. The Board noted that provision in this area of the course is heavily lecture-driven, and wondered whether students at the lower end of achievement were being appropriately supported in the studio. The Board advises the School to raise projects to a level in which these elements are implicit, rather than appearing as an add-on.

The Board encourages the students to be more experimental in their exploration and representation of approaches to construction and structure which implicitly integrate best practice approaches to sustainable design.

- *Cultural Context*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture and Diploma in Architecture (International) met the all Part Two criteria in the area of cultural context.

The Board praised the parity of opportunity provided by study trips on both pathways of the course. Students benefit from the full range of opportunities as evidenced in the best dissertation work.

- *Communication*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Diploma in

Architecture and Diploma in Architecture (International) met the all Part Two criteria in the area of communication.

While students displayed a full range of presentation skills, the Board considered that there might be too much reliance on CAD. While final presentations are impressive the Board encourages the students to share process work through a range of media (see earlier).

- *Management Practice & Law*

On the basis of the sample of portfolios provided, the Board confirmed that all graduates of the Diploma in Architecture and Diploma in Architecture (International) met the all Part Two criteria in the area of management, practice and law.

This is delivered through the Architectural Practice, Management and Law module in the fourth year at which point it is also examined. This also counts towards Part Three for Huddersfield Diploma graduates who remain at the School. Although the Board was content that all criteria were met, it was concerned that a student's knowledge may require review by the time he or she presents for Part Three examination, as this may be several years after obtaining Part Two.

The Board advises that students might consider producing a project report (this is especially important when considering overseas locations where different requirements apply).

13.6.4 Progression within the course

The Board considered that progression rates were average.

13.6.5 Assessment:

Assessment methods are robust, fair and appropriate to the task in hand. Students are content with the level and quality of feedback. The Board concurs with the advice given by a Part Two External Examiner that the School ‘clarify and make explicit the means by which student achievement is checked against ARB prescription criteria.’

The University classification system has recently been modified, which may result in a greater spread of awards across all classes of degree.

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

Approximately two-thirds of the intake at Part Two are Huddersfield Part One graduates; the remaining third have gained Part One elsewhere. Students from outside the institution, Huddersfield Part One graduates with a poor degree or those who have not taken the Huddersfield Professional Experience ‘Year Out’ module are normally given an interview which includes assessment of design and academic ability. In 2006/2007, 37 students entered year one of the Diploma. The target intake is 19.

The Board noted that in the cohort under consideration, one student had entered year five directly. This had been appropriately dealt with clear University Direct Entry procedures.

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

Preparation for Part Three begins at Diploma level through the Professional Studies, Building Economics and Management areas of study. Towards the end of the Diploma course, students attend a half day session which

introduces them to Part Three and at which they are also provided with relevant documentation including information about the PEDR system. Students are also given advice about architectural practice; here the School’s strong links with local practice are valuable. The Department maintains a database of practices and vacancies are advertised in the School.

Part Three candidates must register with the School and their practical training is monitored by the Practical Training Adviser (PTA), who also visits all candidates in practice. Candidates are counselled on whether they are ready to present for examination. A study day is held at the University in May and a compulsory, week-long intensive course is held in October.

The Examination itself consists of two written examination papers, submission of CV, case study, personal evaluation of experience and PEDR record sheets and the professional interview.

The Board could not find clear assessment notes but these were later provided by the School. Marks were not recorded on the scripts. The Board was satisfied, following discussions with professional examiners and the Part Three External Examiner, that appropriate assessment methods were used.

The Board advises the School to ensure that all key aspects of the criteria are appropriately addressed in the assignments, particularly with regard to the ever-changing aspects of Part Three. This is particularly in connection with the possible lapse of time between the examination in the first year of the Diploma and the final Part Three

examination, which may mean that material could be out of date.

The Board also encourages the School to monitor those aspects of the Diploma which contribute towards the knowledge base of the Part Three, such as changes to CDM regulations, new forms of contract and so forth.

The Board advises the School to consider its examining procedures with a view to clarifying the role of professional examiners and the internal examiner, who is in fact an observer.

The Board advises the School to explore further critical practice in its broader sense, especially in the light of Part Three being a Masters or Masters (international).

The majority of Part Three candidates have gained Part Two at Huddersfield. The Board advises the School to consider the admission requirements for Part Three. As it is so closely linked with the Huddersfield Part Two, the Board wondered whether this made it more difficult for graduates of other schools to enrol.

13.8 **External examining arrangements**

The School has appointed a strong team of experienced External Examiners who are clearly supportive of its activities, seeing themselves as a critical friend to the School. The Examiners are keen to assist School staff in raising the students' aspirations and engaging with them productively. The Externals confirmed that the School is open to advice and criticism and acts on their recommendations. The School is required to complete a form six months after the externals' visit to confirm that

they are acting on the externals' recommendations. The Externals praised the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff who provided a caring environment for the students.

All students at the point of award are interviewed and examiners also see first and second years. The Externals also meet Part Two students about a month before the final exam. They remarked that students appear to believe that this is part of the examination process when this is not the case; clarification of the external examining process for students is important.

The Examiners take particular care over threshold standards, at the pass threshold and between classifications. Examiners can be involved, although rarely, within the University regulations, in the decisions over degree classifications. The Externals' consideration of work also takes the joint RIBA/ARB criteria into account.

The Examiners made the following observations about the validated programmes:

- The External examiners were confident that ambition was being raised and that degree classifications ultimately would reflect higher levels of attainment.
- The Externals believed that the improvement in quality of work can be linked to the improvement in cohorts over the last two years.
- The Examiners observed, with the Board, that polarity in achievement at Part Two is considerable. The Examiners believed that the course was stretching the students appropriately, so this might be ascribed purely to ability.
- The Examiners confirmed that the teaching of history and theory and context is evolving and the standard of dissertations has been raised since the students were

given vacation time in which to prepare. Real improvements in the area of cultural context have been achieved at Part One. The teaching of history and theory is now feeding into design to a greater level.

- The School's approach to technology is appropriate, although resources are stretched.
- The Externals were confident that they were presented with the complete academic portfolio, demonstrating compliance with the criteria. The School is encouraging students to document developmental work. This has been more successful at Part One than at Part Two. The Externals wondered whether this may be ascribed to a lack of confidence in students.
- Project subject matter has progressively become more appropriate following comments from Externals.
- The Externals supported the School's decision to discontinue with Urban and Smart Design awards; in addition to the fact that these areas were covered in the established Part One courses, they also considered it was difficult for students to make such choice in their third year.
- The Externals commended the opportunity for overseas travel in the third year of Part One as one of the strengths of the course.
- The Externals commended the strong links with practice at Part Three.

The Board found that the External Examiners are clearly very supportive of the school and are engaging with the development of the course. However the Board considered that it is critical that their reports are received on time. The Board noted that there were several issues, such as technology, which arose during the course of their

meeting but which had not been mentioned in the reports. The Board believes that External Examiners' reports should address issues they have found of concern, in order to enable the School to address them in the course of quality review processes.

The Board learned that External Examiners can be involved in the assessment of individuals. In the case of internal disagreement over a mark, this can be referred to an External Examiner for comment. This would be reported to the Examination Board and recorded in the minutes External. The School said that students should be made clear about this in the module/course handbooks. The Board recommends that the School clarifies its procedures on the briefing of External Examiners and their role, and the mechanism for the School to take forward and further respond to the advice and suggestions of External Examiners.

13.9 **Arrangements for Monitoring Professional Experience**

The Board found that arrangements for monitoring professional experience were very good. There are strong links between graduates and the school and workplace.

13.10 **Students;**

The Board was pleased to meet students from all years of all courses at an interesting and informative meeting. Students appeared to identify very strongly with the School, were supportive of the staff and reported positive experiences. They believed strongly that the student body made the School what it is. Among the positive elements the students mentioned:

- The vibrancy and thriving nature of Huddersfield

- The dedication of staff.
- The foundation programme, which provides the opportunity to change career
- The studio space, which students try to use as much as possible, although it is now under some pressure.
- The studio culture and dialogue between all years and all programmes which gives students the opportunity to see and review each others' work.
- The variety of trips offered by the School and the international contacts.
- The parity of opportunity offered by all pathways at Part One and Part Two. .
- The availability and approachability of staff. Students thought that resourcing was good and in practice they are able to approach any member of staff for advice.
- The freedom to pursue individual interests and develop their own direction.
- The programmes give them a strong foundation and basis in reality in which to build.
- The School's links with local practice and the good preparation and support the students receive.
- The School's position in a school of art and design and the potential to see the work of students in other disciplines. Students may use whatever media or material they wish for explorations. However as the subject areas and facilities are housed in different buildings students thought that their impact is not as immediate as it could be.
- Feedback mechanisms, both formal and informal, are good and students feel that their opinions are heard.
- Students in higher years mentioned that they would have appreciated earlier formal coverage of history and theory; students in the lower years reported that this had been implemented.

13.11 Staff;

The present staff:student ratio is 1:23.85, which the Board considered to be on the high side. There are presently 9 full-time equivalent staff (11 individuals) and 2.47 full time equivalent part-time staff (22 individuals, including visiting lecturers and consultants). There is a feeling of change which will take time to come into effect.

The Board was pleased to meet many full time, part-time and fractional staff in a frank and open discussion about the past, present and future challenges facing the School. A new beginning is marked by the inclusion of Architecture in the name of the School, demonstrating its importance within the School and the University.

The Board commends the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff who appear to work together well as a team, having a degree of autonomy as a department and being involved in decision-making. They appear to thrive in the current size of the department, which engenders a sense of community.

The staff have responded well to recent challenges and developments, which are set to continue following the appointment of the new Dean and Vice-Chancellor. These include a new focus on the student experience and ensuring that activities are academically-led and not bureaucratically-driven, which complements the School's philosophy. The staff feel supported at senior management level and are confident that changes will be positive and will help them to maintain and enhance the present, much valued ethos and character of the School.

One potential threat would be a failure to match any future growth in student numbers (which have already increased significantly in the last few years) with an appropriate growth in staff numbers. The staff wish to maintain an appropriate SSR, enabling them to retain an open door policy to the students and their wish to cater for individual students' interests, needs and strengths. The steady increase in student numbers has been accommodated by new and part time appointments, but this will have to be maintained if student numbers continue to grow. As mentioned earlier, twenty professorships have been created for which individual schools will place bids. Further appointments are to be made, including (if the School's bid is successful) a professorial appointment. This will probably chiefly be an academic appointment.

The staff intend to take advantage of the opportunities being presented by the new building, facilities and professorships recently announced. The School is confident that more cross-collaboration between departments will happen, in both teaching and research, the two activities complementing the other. Architecture has tried to take the lead with this, beginning with interior design. Fashion design students will also take part in next year's trip to Kunming. Possibilities for collaboration exist not only in art and design but also sustainability.

The University staff development department offers training and development opportunities. The Board was interested to learn that the University runs a teaching and learning conference for the whole institution.

13.12 Research;

The Board observed that research activity within the School is in a state of flux. The School is presently seeking to enhance its research profile, in line with the University's ambitions in this area. In the RAE 2001 the School achieved 2 in History of Art, Architecture and Design and 3b in Art and Design. The new Vice-Chancellor intends to promote pioneering research, building on the University's expertise in creative practice, professional practice and links with the community and employers. A Pro-Vice-Chancellor for research has recently been appointed. The University offers 200 research scholarships and has recently announced 20 professorships. The University is currently negotiating the allocation of professorships and studentships among the various schools.

The University see its traditional strength as being in undergraduate teaching and now wishes to develop a postgraduate strategy. This will complement and inform undergraduate teaching to which the University remains committed. As a part of this move the university has also increased staff development funds (100k) and will offer PhDs by publication and PhDs by practice.

The Board noted that most of the University's existing postgraduate provision has been in architecture, providing a basis on which the School can build. Staff have submitted to the RAE 2008. The School hopes that, with an increasing research agenda, the university will amend the time allocation and provide additional staff.

There is some correlation between research activity in sustainability and regional and cultural identity and coursework. Practice as applied research and engagements with industry are also areas of interest.

The Board was encouraged by the Vice-Chancellor's commitment to research. The Board encourages the School to focus on future opportunities that are being discussed and devise strategies to maximise the opportunities presented by new policies.

13.13 Equal Opportunities:

The university has clearly stated equal opportunities policies and keeps detailed statistics on gender, ethnic background and entry qualifications. The University is committed to widening access to higher education to those who would most benefit. There is a very diverse range of students as regards ethnic background although the majority are male, particularly at Part Two. The Board noted a gender imbalance among the academic staff, the majority of whom were men, although when taken as a whole the staff gender balance was good.

13.14 Resourcing and facilities;

The new Vice-Chancellor has had an immediate and positive impact on resource in the form of heavy investment in the University's estates. Of particular significance to Art and Design is the new Creative Arts building. Although architecture will not physically move, the new building is intended to provide a focal point for creative arts disciplines and architecture will use it for exhibitions. Architecture will also gain space in its present location when other disciplines move to the new building. The new building will be finished by March 2008.

The Department of Architecture values its position in an Art and Design School because of the access to the work and facilities of other courses. As Architecture is well provided for in its own building, use of other facilities has

not been as frequent as might be expected. This may be easier when most of the School is housed in one building. The Dean of the School is committed to exploring synergies between disciplines.

The present funding model is transparent and devolved to the schools. Funding is largely student-number driven and income earned by each school goes directly back to the school, giving the deans the power to decide how it should be spent. This must benefit the students directly.

- Studios

The School's activities are chiefly housed in the Canalside East building which is shared with the School of Computing and Engineering and the School of Education and Professional Development. Other shared facilities, such as workshops, are located in nearby buildings. The Department of Architecture has its own dedicated space within the building. There are two large main studios; one shared by the Foundation programme and all Part One Architecture pathways and a second large Postgraduate Studio. There is also Review Space. The Board agreed that studio provision was good. The School aims for spatial coherence and a creative community, encouraging multidisciplinary working.

- Workshops

Small scale model-making can be undertaken in the studios. Students also have access, following the necessary training, to the School's workshops in a nearby building which contain a range of hand held and power tools. These also include two Rapid Prototype machines and a recently-acquired A1 laser cutter, which are operated by qualified technicians.

- IT

Architecture shares a CAD teaching room with the School of Computing and Engineering. Architecture has use of it in the afternoons and it is available on open access outside teaching times. There are machines in the architectural studios and 16 in the Technical Reference Bureau. All machines are fully networked and a 'wireless cloud' has recently been created. The key software applications used include ArchiCAD, AutoCad ADT, Maya and StudioMax. Students may also use the specialist software in the Department's Multimedia and Virtual Reality studios. Although many students have their own laptops, the School can provide them on short-term loan. There are dedicated IT and print technicians.

The School has on-site A0 printing facilities in the Technical Reference Bureau and the nearby Technology building provides professional colour printing services, including high-quality printing from A3-A0. Students may book particular machines for particular jobs. Printing is provided at cost price.

- Library

Library provision is very good, both at School and at University level. The School is fortunate in having an in-house Technical Reference Bureau, which is intended to function like an office practice library. This is operated by a dedicated librarian and is the students' first point of reference for technical information. They are directed to the University library for the main reference texts. The Technical Reference Bureau is also open to students enrolled on the School's other courses. The TRB contains journals, core textbooks, access to databases and technical indices and a product library. Items in the TRB are for reference only but may be copied within legal limits. The

TRB also provides computing and reprographics facilities and can loan surveying equipment, cameras, video cameras and laptops.

Adjacent to the TRB is the School's Image Library, containing over 60000 images of architecture, painting, sculpture, textiles and so forth. The traditional slides are being used less but the centre is gradually digitising the images for which they own the copyright.

The main University library and computing centre is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment in order to bring key student services (including counselling, welfare and IT) together in one location, creating a more welcoming and student-centred environment. This started in summer 2007 with the entrance area. The University has already noticed the positive impact this has had on students.

All new students receive an induction, followed when appropriate by more advanced workshops and information searching classes. The main Library has recently created a dedicated space for Art, Design and Architecture which contains over 10000 books and 60 relevant journals. All architecture books may be borrowed. Frequently-used journals are available in both electronic and print formats; electronic journals may be accessed remotely. Current journals are on display and past editions are easily accessible. All dissertations have been catalogued. Archived journals are also easily accessible. The Library also subscribes to relevant databases, which also may be accessed from anywhere. The Library also provides extensive IT facilities including over 400 PCs and iMacs for student use, some providing specialist design software. There are also bookable teaching rooms and

group discussion areas. The computer centre is open 24 hours a day during term time; opening hours of the main Library are generous, extending to 24 hours a day during revision and examination periods. There is an academic skills tutor to help students with written English, whether as a second language or to help native speakers improve

Liaison arrangements with the School are very impressive. There is a clear formula for the book fund allocation; the School librarian has discretion over expenditure.

Overall the Board considered that resources are good and improving. There have been many recent positive changes and many more are planned. The Board believed that the physical location and nature of the School and the facilities it offers should encourage architecture students' natural curiosity about related disciplines. The Board had found that some students had discovered the natural learning environment about them, by seeing what students on other programmes were doing in the workshops and studios. More architecture students should be encouraged to do this.

14. Documentation Provided

Critical Self-Appraisal

Questionnaire

Supplementary Information including External Examiners' reports 2004-2007.