



**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board  
to University of Architecture, Civil  
Engineering & Geodesy**

**Date of visiting board:** 30-31 October, 2024

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee:** 31 March 2025

**1 Details of institution hosting courses**

University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy  
1 Hr. Smirnenski Blvd  
1046 Sofia  
Bulgaria

<https://uacg.bg/?l=2>

**2 Courses offered for validation.**

MSc Programme of Architecture Parts 1 & 2

**3 Head of School & Course Leads**

**Dean (Head of School)**

Prof. Dr. Arch. Orlin Davchev

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arch. Tzvetelina Daskalova - Deputy dean for research and international activities

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arch. Eugenia Dimova - Alexandrova - Deputy dean for academic activities

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arch. Milena Tasheva - Petrova - Head of department "Urban Planning"

Senior Assist. Prof. Dr. Arch. Antonina Ilieva - teaching in department "Public Buildings"

**4 Awarding body**

University of Architecture, Civil Engineering & Geodesy

**5 The visiting board**

Albena Atanassova-Price (Chair)	Practitioner
Frosso Pimenides (Vice chair)	Academic
Daniel Elkington	Practitioner/Academic
Tracy Flanagan	Validation Manager

**6 Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education**

The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

**7 Proposals of the visiting board**

On 31 March 2025, the RIBA confirmed continued validation/s with conditions of the following course:

**MSc Programme of Architecture Parts 1 & 2**

Details of the condition can be found in section 11. A revisiting board will take place at a date to be agreed between the RIBA and the School.

**8 Standard requirements for continued recognition**

Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

- i external examiners being appointed for the course
- ii any significant changes to the courses and qualifications being submitted to the RIBA.
- iii any change of award title, and the effective date of the change, being notified to the RIBA so that its recognition may formally be transferred to the new title.
- iv submission to the RIBA of the names of students passing the courses and qualifications listed.
- v In the UK, standard requirements of validation include the completion by the of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

**9 Academic position statement (written by the School)**

The University of Architecture Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy (UACEG) in Sofia, where our Faculty of Architecture is situated, is the oldest and most renowned academic institution in Bulgaria, which forms architectural and construction professionals, and its Faculty of Architecture is the place where the specialty "Architecture" has been taught in Bulgaria for the longest time – since 1942. In 1951 it was also separated as an independent academic unit.

This defines the exceptional national responsibility of the faculty to create full-fledged specialists capable of solving the architectural and planning problems of the present. Here architecture is seen as a complex profession that is both an expert civil engineering activity, but also a creative art, bordering on many other related fields. Strong relationship with practice and the actual design process is actively sought. Active links are maintained with business, professional branch organisations, institutions and the non-government sector. Participation in national and international architectural competitions, research projects, travel and diverse practices are encouraged, links are maintained with many European and world universities and every opportunity is taken for international exchange of students, teachers and knowledge.

The aim is to create multi-faceted specialists who can find realisation in the most diverse segments of the architecture and construction industry – design of residential, public and industrial buildings, complete and partial renovation of the building stock, introduction of new technologies in architecture and energy efficient solutions, interior and design for architecture, preservation of immovable cultural heritage, expert activity in the field of territorial and regional planning, development and updating of spatial plans, landscape planning.

**Academic process and structure**

Located within the city centre of Sofia, the Faculty of Architecture offers Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programs, concentrating at one campus all educational facilities, library, student workshops and exhibition spaces.

During 11 semesters or 5.5 years of education our students of architecture have to study 87 disciplines – 45 lecture courses, 26 design projects, 5 types of practical training and other engineering design projects and drawing

exercises. The distribution of disciplines by scientific field for a graduate Architecture Master degree in architecture is regulated by a state ordinance dating back to 2003 and defining 9 scientific fields in architectural education: theory and history of art and architecture; humanitarian and social sciences; natural sciences, mathematics and informatics; architectural typology and architectural design, interior and industrial design, urban planning and urbanism, architectural technology, engineering disciplines and arts. Since 2002, the Faculty of Architecture has started offering the only training in Urbanism in the country, encompassing all levels of the planning system currently functioning in the country. In 2017 a new program in Landscape Design and Architecture was also introduced.

The faculty has 8 departments – History and Theory of Architecture, Industrial Buildings, Interior and Design in Architecture, Public Buildings, Residential Buildings, Urban Planning, Technology of Architecture, Fine Arts and Modelling. One of the first seven has to be selected by students for specialisation during the last 3 semesters. All types of horizontal educational connections and activities among departments are encouraged to ensure consistent and complex development at the faculty in general.

### **Strengths and Opportunities**

The Faculty of Architecture of UASG has the advantage of being part of a broad-spectrum university with a polytechnic orientation. Many experts from other faculties of UACEG are also involved in the training of architecture students, which helps maintain interdisciplinarity – key both for the architectural profession in particular and for a quality modern education in general. This close relationship between architects and engineers in the faculty can be noted as an exceptional feature of the education process.

Another is the faculty's close connections with the industry, with state and municipal bodies, with government and non-government institutions which are involved in the education process on various design projects.

In order to achieve complexity and constant relevance of knowledge, the faculty offers several superstructural Master's programmes:

- The international "Computational and Advanced Design"
- the interdisciplinary "Cultural Heritage Conservation", which is open for both architects and engineers.
- BIM Management and Optimization of IP/P in AEC
- Spatial Planning

The faculty is trying to achieve a balance between well-established and alternative forms of architectural education. The Fine Arts and Modelling Department maintains a long lasting tradition of integration between arts and architecture. *Studio Projektirane* is a self-organised informal design studio space, established in 2012 and maintained by teachers and students. *Fablab* is a laser and 3D printing laboratory offering opportunities for the students to learn and work with the latest technologies. Both are located on campus ground, in the backyard spaces on the underground level. Events such as the IAA Architectural Triennale at the university enable students to meet

worldwide professionals and academicians on campus and have fruitful contacts for future career opportunities.

It is important to emphasise how diverse the projects developed by future architects and urban planners at UACEG are. The vast majority of these projects show meaningful work on publicly significant cases, offer critical insight and solutions to current design and land-use issues. Students are encouraged to take part in architectural and urban planning competitions in the country and worldwide which are integrated within the educational program. Many of them have been awarded and have been published in national and international media.

### **Aims and Outcomes**

In the period 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> years of study our system is divided into an introductory, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> educational levels. The aim is to establish a wide base of knowledge necessary for architects – from the history of art and architecture, concept creation, functional requirements, technology basics, understanding of the relationship between building, site and settlement up to the social role of the architect, the ecological aspects of design and the legislative framework. An important outcome is the ability to freely use various contemporary software products for architectural design.

The next level is the period of specialisation at one of the 7<sup>th</sup> departments and the aim is to deepen knowledge and understanding in the stage of critical analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the site, formulation of a design brief, team working and professional communication skills, preparation of professional design documentation. At this level a high number of elective disciplines is offered to provide skills relevant to modern professional practice and various well-known practitioners are integrated in the teaching process. The possibilities for professional training periods at architectural studios in Bulgaria and abroad are developing further by Erasmus training programs, collaboration with the Chamber of architects and other European projects.

The final graduation project is an all encompassing work based on a thorough research and a critical analysis of the topography, physical and social problematic of the site, formulation of a problem and a fully fledged design brief with an adequate range of technical documentation, regarding concept, functional organisation, technology solution and selected building materials and details.

## **10 Commendations**

- 10.1** The board commends the school's commitment to facilitating students' professional experience through work placements, which offer valuable opportunities for practical learning. It is evident that this collaboration of academia and practice is of huge benefit to the student and their future careers and development, and the role of an architect in current times. This commitment has resulted in a high number of graduates successfully securing job roles within the architectural environment.

## **11 Conditions**

Conditional validation has been recommended for the following reason:

- 11.1 The Faculty must make available to the RIBA Visiting Board portfolios containing the full range of students' achievements. An academic portfolio contains all the assessed work produced by a student during an academic year where the RIBA Graduate Attributes and Themes & Values are met. (as noted in Section 3.5 of the RIBA Procedures for Validation)
- 11.2 The Board found insufficient evidence that Graduate Attributes GA3, GA4, GA5, and G6 were demonstrated within the academic portfolios. The Faculty must provide evidence which clearly illustrates how all Graduate Attributes and RIBA Themes and Values are fully met. In particular the Board would like to see evidence of the following Themes and Values within the portfolio: Ethical and Professional Practice, Design Pedagogies and Architectural Expression and Business Skills.
- 11.3 The Board requested supplementary evidence prior to and during the visit which, did not meet the Validation requirements. The Faculty must provide academic transcripts for each cohort at award levels which must include marks for all the modules undertaken by a student during an academic year, arranged high to low. Briefs for all modules at award level should be included alongside portfolios.

The revisiting sub-group will visit the school for 1 day within 1 year of the full board and following the graduation of the next award level cohort. Where the revisiting sub-group is satisfied the conditions in the report have been met, the RIBA Education and Learning Committee will recommend validation without conditions until the next scheduled visiting board (i.e., usually 5 years after the last full board visit).

## 12 **Action points**

The visiting board proposes the following action points. The RIBA expects the university to report on how it will address these action points. The university is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 12.1 For future RIBA Visiting Boards, the School must provide complete and comprehensive documentation ahead of the visit to ensure board members are appropriately briefed.

The list of documentation required for a full Visiting Board can be found on page.32 of the RIBA Procedures for Validation.

- 12.2 Student Appraisal authored by a cross section of the student body and limited to 750 words should be provided at the next visit. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on the quality of their experience.

## 13 **Advice**

The visiting board offers the following advice to the School on desirable, but not essential improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards.

- 13.1 The Board would encourage the Faculty to observe an RIBA validation visit to another validated School of Architecture. This should help with the validation process.
- 13.2 The Board advises that the Faculty consider how the spaces used by students are organised to facilitate better interaction between students across the different years and with other disciplines.
- 13.3 The Board advises that programme teams undertake a comprehensive review of their standardisation and moderation processes for student grades to ensure comparability across the various departments.
- 13.4 The Board would encourage the Faculty to review how feedback is communicated to students to ensure there is parity across staff in different departments. In a similar manner, student feedback should be clearly communicated back to staff.
- 14 It should be noted that where the visiting board considered graduate attributes to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or an attribute clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a graduate attribute was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

**Graduate Attributes for Part 1**

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MSc Programme of Architecture Part 1.

**Graduate Attributes for Part 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MSc Programme of Architecture Part 2.

- 15 It should be noted that where the visiting board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a T&V were clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a T&V was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

**Themes and Values for Part 1**

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the MSc Programme of Architecture Part 1.

**Themes and Values for Part 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the MSc Programme of Architecture Part 2.

**16.1 Student numbers (from the school)**

MSc Programme of Architecture Parts 1 & 2

Year 1 x 181

Year 2 x 182

Year 3 x 162

Year 4 x 156

Year 5 x 130

**17 Notes of meetings**

On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings. These notes will not form part of the published report but will be made available on request. The full set of notes will be issued to the next full visiting board.

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Students
- Head of institution
- External examiners
- Staff