
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA exploratory board to
Loughborough University**

School of Architecture, Building and Civil Engineering

Date of visiting board: 7/8 June 2018

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 19 October 2018

1 Details of institution hosting course/s

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School of Architecture, Building and Civil Engineering
Loughborough University
Loughborough, LE11 3TU

2 Programme Director

Dr Robert Schmidt III

3 Course/s offered for candidate course status

Bachelor of Architecture BArch

4 Awarding body

Loughborough University

5 The visiting board

Simon Gratton, Chair
Professor Doug King, Vice Chair
Professor Susannah Hagan

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – RIBA Validation Manager was in attendance

6 Procedures and criteria for the visit

The visiting board was carried out under the *RIBA procedures validation and validation criteria for UK and international courses and examinations in architecture* (published July 2011, and effective from September 2011); this document is available at www.architecture.com.

7 Recommendation of the Exploratory Board

The Board was invited by Loughborough University to consider its Bachelor of Architecture BArch programme for candidate course status for RIBA Part 1. The designation ‘candidate course for recognition’ implies that the programme is considered to have the potential to meet RIBA criteria, if implemented as anticipated.

On 19 October 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following programme be awarded Candidate Course Status for Part 1:

Bachelor of Architecture BArch

A full visiting board to consider the programme for initial validation and full RIBA recognition of Part 1 will take place at a date to be agreed between the RIBA and Loughborough University. This is likely to be when the first cohort graduates.

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

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- 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 institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

9 Academic position statement (Statement written by the school)
As architects, it might serve to remember our education more as a cultural immersion than simply dry academic training. It is therefore uppermost in our minds to create an environment that is challenging and exciting, one that is artistically stimulating, culturally aware and technically demanding. We want passionate debates that can inspire free-wheeling creativity expressed by articulate thinking and critical interrogation. We want our school to foster the close friendships, warmth and mutual support that make the successes and failures of learning through problem-based explorations, not just engaging but life forming.

We believe that Architectural education should excite students with the possibilities of what they can achieve - it should drive curiosity of the unknown and propel a raw enthusiasm and inquisitiveness for life, art and our built environment. Students should enjoy their studies and increasingly take ownership of their education as part of their journey.

We have set ourselves a high standard with the understanding that it cannot be achieved overnight.

We have made no attempt to rush the process, but instead have planned each stage of our establishment, inception and early development meticulously. We have a distinct character and strong reputation as a University and School (ABCE), but as a School of Architecture, our reputation is yet to be established. Our current focus is on the composition and delivery of our BArch, but this sits within the wider context of our plan for a MArch programme that will offer opportunities to study alongside postgraduates on other built environment courses within the broader School.

In a national and even international context, being new in architectural education affords us the opportunity to write our story, to build on our existing strengths that include design, working with industry, a pleasant and superbly equipped large green campus, sports and an inspirational dedicated building. The programme is designed with a clear balance between Arts and technical teaching to produce rounded and highly motivated graduates well prepared for a successful career as an architect, and for those that wish, leaders in other fields. The particular combination of knowledge and

skills the programme offers includes the successful practical and transferable skills our current graduates bring to industry such as excellent verbal communication, management and teamwork to supplement core design skills.

We expect our graduates to have the courage and confidence to become leaders wherever their careers take them. In due course, we will earn our reputation, through the quality of the course and its teaching, the dedication and expertise of our staff and most importantly the quality of the graduates we produce.

Our academic approach embodies five tenets of teaching and learning:

1. Design focused culture

The allocation of individual studio space throughout the educational journey and the support of world-class labs/workshop spaces will help our programme stand apart and facilitate an inspirational and collaborative environment that stimulates imagination, creativity, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking that is essential in a successful architect. The studio environment will be at the centre of the students' education and discovery of their own design process through a heuristic approach: research, writing, dialogue, sketching, drawing, modelling, sharing and critiquing. The studio culture must present an engaging platform, capable of differentiation, for the greatest opportunity of personal growth and ultimately independence in design and learning. The new open plan studio environments with all 'furniture' on castors and writable/magnetic surfaces allow students to appropriate the space to their 'design' needs.

2. Learning through production and making

Our programme will embrace the University's tradition of learning through making, where students will benefit from existing facilities alongside the development of new resources. Our renovated workshop facilities will exploit the double-height, open plan space for model making and large-scale mock-ups of details. The large open campus environment (including the adjacent green quad) is ripe for full size prototypes and pavilions to engage the broader student population and local community. The existing laboratory facilities in the School and wider University will provide experiences that cultivate an acute understanding of materials, their properties, technical capabilities and associated construction processes which inform the craft of architecture.

Traditional workshop spaces enable the exploration of design ideas through hands-on construction of physical objects and the new Digital Fabrication Lab (DFL) and Mixed Reality and Robotic Research lab (MRP³L) allow students to push design and making boundaries.

3. Broad based education

Students will consider architecture within broader cultural, environmental, organisational and historic contexts. Cross-fertilization with modules in the broader curricula of the School and the University's Schools of Art, Design, Geography and Material Engineering will provide opportunities to explore knowledge, technologies, skills and attitudes that contribute to the broad anatomy of architecture. There will be shared teaching across the programmes and students will acquire an appreciation and respect for these allied professions and a real understanding of the importance of working within a team of individuals and organisations with different skills to create successful and design projects.

4. Practical learning through placement

Our School's existing educational alignment with industry chimes well with the fundamental belief that architectural education benefits from a practice-based anchor. Students will undertake a placement year with a practice following the completion of the first two years of the programme, which in turn will enhance the final year experience and hence graduate skills and mind-set. This proven pattern of education has been successfully embodied in the School's undergraduate programmes as well as others at Loughborough for decades. We will draw upon our substantial family of degree sponsors, employers and research collaborators, adding many new architectural #practices as the course matures.

5. Research based modules

Good architecture is supported thorough good research. The wealth of world-leading research (physical and social sciences) within our School will be a profound influence and, whilst this is an undergraduate programme, students will be introduced at an early stage to techniques for sound research and exploration as a basis for evidence-based design. Design work should foster imagination and creativity, but students should develop knowledge bases and critical positions that underpin their creativity and relate to contemporary social, political, environmental and economic issues. Moreover, understanding how design translates into architecture is crucial; 'live' projects (as a form of research) will require students to make connections and identify gaps between briefing, visualisation and assembling. Design-studio rigour will be encouraged through cross-disciplinary, collaborative studios that engage real sites, communities and University estate needs.

We are fortunate to be part of a School and University with fantastic facilities and a strong reputation for teaching, research and student experience. From this position, we are building a team of exceptional educators, practitioners and researchers that share a passion for architectural education.

In the field of higher education it is not enough to be a purveyor of expert knowledge – a high quality educational experience requires alternative pedagogies that are blended, interactive, adaptive and

diversified. Architects are asked to translate the complex needs of others, described in words, into three-dimensional solutions. It is here, in this cultural immersion, where we are inculcated with the need to question everything and search for new possibilities that great architecture can arise for the benefit of society.

10 Commendations

- 10.1 The Board commends the University and Faculty for the investment in staff and facilities and commitment to the considered growth of the architecture programme.
- 10.2 The Board commends the ethos of the programme: the collegiality of the staff; their accessibility to students; and the personalised student experience.
- 10.3 The Board commends the innovative pedagogy: the integration of separate modules to balance art and technology.
- 10.4 The Board commends the enthusiasm demonstrated by all staff involved in the project, from the tutors to the VC.

11 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. Failure by the university to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

- 11.1 There are no action points.

12. Advice

The 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.

- 12.1 The Board advises early consideration of managing a growing cohort without losing the essential ethos of the programme (10.2).
- 12.2 As discussed with the programme team, the Board reminds the School not to lose sight of the importance of the art of architecture.

13 Delivery of graduate attributes

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 was confident that the Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) programme had the potential to meet the Graduate Attributes for Part 1 if implemented as anticipated.

14 Review of work against criteria

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

Criteria for Part 1

The Board was confident that the Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) programme had the potential to meet the validation criteria if implemented as anticipated.

15. Other information

15.1 Student numbers

33 in initial cohort (2017/2018)

15.2 Documentation provided

The School provided all documentation as required under the RIBA Procedures for Validation.

16. 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.

- Meeting with the Vice Chancellor
- Meeting with Head of School and budget holder
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with staff