
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full Visiting Board
to University of Central Lancashire**

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- 1** **Details of institution hosting course/s** **(report part A)**
The Grenfell-Baines Institute of Architecture
School of Art, Design and Fashion
University of Central Lancashire
Harris Building, Corporation Street
Preston PR1 2HE
- 2** **Head of Architecture Group**
Desmond Fagan Academic Lead
- 3** **Course/s offered for validation**
BSc (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
- 4** **Course leader/s**
Simon Kay-Jones
- 5** **Awarding body**
University of Central Lancashire
- 6** **The visiting board**
David Dernie practitioner / academic (chair)
Stef Rhodes practitioner (vice chair)
Paul King academic
Sheila Ryding co-professional
Sophie Bailey RIBA validation manager
- 7** **Procedures and criteria for the visit**
The visiting board was carried out under the *RIBA procedures for 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.
- 8** **Recommendation of the Visiting Board**
On the 01 June 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are awarded full validation
- BSc (Hons) Architecture, Part 1**
- The next RIBA visiting board will take place in 2022.
- 9** **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 institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

10 Academic position statement
(Statement written by the school)

Ethos

The BSc (Hons) Architecture course aspires to equip our students with the knowledge and skills required to meet the varied and complex demands of architectural practice. This is pursued through the successful completion of a series of interrelated modules engaging design, technology, history and theory and professional practice. The Institute aims to formally link these educational activities with the localised urban challenges of key interest to the city of Preston, the region, and the North.

We aim to study the impact of global and regional issues from the perspective of local problems, in order to establish the terms for an appropriate and sustainable, socially focused architecture by means of research-informed practice (live, project-based studio work).

We intend to disseminate, exchange and combine these localised studies with related academic institutions, municipalities and agencies at a European and global scale. Our networks to accomplish this are growing – the recently launched Hong Kong (RIBA Part I) course gives us a unique global context with which to test our ideas on the city, and student exchanges to Copenhagen and our work with TU Delft continue to expand our apparatus.

Our links to the city and region are also significant – the involvement of our students and staff in research-led projects position the Institute as an essential resource for the facilitation of local city developments – most recently as advisors for the £14.5 million Heritage Lottery-funded re-imagining of the Grade I listed Harris Museum.

Context and Distinctiveness

Our close community of students and staff is made possible by the scale of the Institute - our small cohorts across all years enable a concentration of inclusivity. We are afforded opportunity to tailor our course to the world-class facilities at our disposal, and time with each student to shape course content and delivery. We provide our students with space to shape the direction of their own education, facilitating approaches to self-directed study and engendering agility, resilience and rigour.

We concentrate our collective energy into small groups that give students confidence and allows them to build complex creative investigations into their design process. We place emphasis on the importance of students recording and critically reflecting their ideas as part of the process. We aim to catch the 'process in action' through design experiences and encourage students to develop their communication skills using a full range of both traditional and digital techniques and media.

Studio spaces allow for dynamic interaction between each year of the course - working in the same space, students informally cross-fertilise ideas in a system of casual peer review. The creation of virtual learning environments and social communities complement the Institutes' global theme, and promotes mobility and networking. Now part of the School of Art, Design and Fashion, our community exists within the context of a larger Institute of foundation-level and postgraduate architects, and at school level in a creative environment, whilst maintaining strong historic ties with the construction and engineering disciplines.

Our size enables us to practice effective and flexible deployment of staff expertise and research output to further enhance student experience, increasing the local and global exposure of the students, staff and school. Institute staff are engaged in a variety of research activities which inform their teaching. These activities encompass the Practice and Pedagogy of Architecture; Design Creativity; Critical Cultural Contexts; Housing and Everyday Life; the Phenomenology of Making; Sustainable Cities and Future Models of Practice. This varied approach to the praxis of architecture contributes diverse specialisms that help inspire student-led propositions.

Practical Experience

We have established a network of practical experience opportunities – final year students are offered a placement in a local architectural practice through our RIBA coordinated Student Mentoring Scheme delivering practical experience and opportunity for ongoing employment. The University Alumni Programme facilitates a tailored start-up package in collaboration with Northern Lights for students wishing to test out their entrepreneurial skills and benefit from the access to our extensive studio, workshop and advanced laboratories. Students take part in live project briefs coordinated by the Institute's own architecture practice Design Research North, a grant funded office that works with students on community projects in Preston.

The broader campus environment is undergoing a £200 million Masterplan rejuvenation with the aim to create a world-class educational environment providing new facilities to benefit the university, the city of Preston, and the economy of the North West. We aim to capitalise on this opportunity by utilising the construction site as a place for observation and interaction. Ongoing consultation with staff and students on the masterplan demonstrates our growing role in the re-shaping of the campus and city.

Criteria Attainment

Although staff emphasise the importance of criteria attainment across all modules, we also wish to develop reflective and self-motivated students who are able to identify their own strengths and specialisms. We encourage students to practice speculative thought as a means to consider differing approaches to problems. We ask students to appraise their existing knowledge in juxtaposition with new skills gained from the course, in the context of current local professional practice. We aspire for our students to meet the demand for architects that can

generate sustainable, socially focused architecture by means of research-informed practice.

Fundamental to achieving this aspiration is the Institute of Architecture's drive to maintain a collaborative community of students, staff and architects involved collectively in the exploration of architecture. This vocational support, equipping students with the means to move on to practice in context with the knowledge and skills gained on the BSc course is essential to the aspiration of the Institute as the facilitator of an inclusive and collaborative community of students, staff and architects.

11 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the institutional support for architecture and the enthusiasm and commitment of the student body which is closely supported by a dedicated staff team.
- 11.2 The board commends the unique and extensive workshop facilities and technical support team made available to students.
- 11.3 The board commends the History and Theory strand and its integration into the design studio programme.

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

- 12.1 The exploration and articulation of place and context was underdeveloped and this should be addressed through studio briefs and at all stages of design development.
- 12.2 Students must be encouraged to test design proposals with respect to context, environment and programme. Studio briefs should encourage the use of sketch models and drawings to further develop proposals and timetables should allow time for refinement of final designs.
- 12.3 The programme should further integrate technologies into the design studio and in particular, encourage the consideration of environment as a driver for design.
- 12.4 On the whole, orthographic drawings, particularly plans, were not fully resolved. Studio briefs should encourage students to draw plans and sections (in addition to models and so forth) to fully develop spatial skills.

13. Advice

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

13.1 The school should consider reviewing the academic position statement to better reflect identity, ethos and direction of the programme.

13.2 The board encourages the school to consider resourcing additional structural, mechanical and environmental consultants to contribute to the design studio.

13.3 The board encourages the school to continue to explore synergies between disciplines both internally and externally, not only facilitated by the workshop spaces, but also by opportunities in subject areas such as medicine that are pertinent to the future of the city and its sustainability agenda.

14 Delivery of academic position

Please see advice point 13.1

15 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 confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates.

16 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.

Graduate Criteria for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 criteria were met by graduates.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

At the time of the 2018 RIBA visiting board:

Level 4 (Year 1) - 38

Level 5 (Year 2) - 34

Level 6 (Year 3) – 26

Total - 98

***Notes of meetings**

On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings:

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