Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA Full Visiting Board to the Architectural Association

Date of visiting board: 22-23 October 2020
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 06 January 2021
Details of institution hosting course/s
Architectural Association School of Architecture
Architectural Association
34-36 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3ES

Senior Management Team
Michael Weinstock Chair of the Academic Committee
Mark Morris Head of Teaching and Learning
Belinda Flaherty Registrar

Course/s offered for validation
Part One: The Architectural Association Experimental Programme (three years full-time)
Part Two: The Architectural Association Diploma Programme (two years full-time)

Awarding body
Architectural Association School of Architecture

The visiting board
Jenny Russell chair / academic
Sally Stewart vice chair / academic
James Lai practitioner
Virginia Rammou academic
Daniel Goodricke academic
Sophie Bailey RIBA validation manager

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.

Recommendation of the Visiting Board
On the 06 January 2021 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

Part One: The Architectural Association Experimental Programme (three years full-time)
Part Two: The Architectural Association Diploma Programme (two years full-time)
Part Three: The Architectural Association Professional Practice & Practical Experience Examination

The next RIBA visiting board will take place in 2025.
8 Academic position statement
(Statement written by the school)
  • New statement to be completed and sent by school.

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 Commendations
The visiting board made the following commendations:

10.1 The board commends the staff and students for their wholehearted
     engagement in the virtual process of RIBA revalidation, within the
     context of the Covid pandemic.

10.2 The board commends the efforts and dedication of the senior
     management team and recognises all that they have undertaken and
     achieved regarding TDAP and as a response to the pandemic. In
     particular, the board acknowledges the proactive response to
     supporting the mental wellbeing of staff and students during this time.

10.3 The board commends the school’s continued pursuit of ensuring a
     democratic structure and culture, which enables students to identify
     their own position within the context of architecture and the built
     environment.

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 The school should write an academic position statement which aligns
     and communicates the overall philosophy of the school and narrates a
     clear vision for the future, in the understanding that this is integral to the
     overall RIBA report and will be published online.

11.2 Following the school’s recent success in achieving TDAP, the board
     strongly recommends that the school continue to review and refine their
     academic regulations and practices in relation to the QAA and the
     Subject Benchmark. In particular, this should include the consideration
     of the processes of moderation and formative and summative feedback
to students. The school should ensure that these processes are communicated clearly to the wider staff and student bodies.

11.3 The board recognises the size of the staff body, in particular the number that come from practice and strongly recommend that the school considers how they can be supported in understanding and implementing the pedagogic and academic procedures of the school.

12. 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.

12.1 In light of the specific unit-based nature of the programmes, the board advises the school consider developing a means for students to reflect on their own academic journey to acknowledge both how they meet the professional criteria and how they position themselves within the wider context of architecture.

12.2 The board advises that the senior management team continue to develop a process of succession planning and academic career progression, to ensure that the robust knowledge and understanding of the current team is not compromised in the event of absence.

12.3 The board advises that the process of external examining is reviewed in order to ensure that the scale of the sample available to examiners allows a more rigorous interrogation of student work.

12.4 The board advises the school to consider how candidates from widening participation backgrounds can be supported to consider the school as a viable destination for undergraduate study. This may include articulation with the foundation course and the development of outreach.

12.5 The board advises the school consider what mechanisms it may develop to support critical self-reflection and enhancement given its situation as a small specialist institution focused on the discipline of architecture.

13 Delivery of academic position
Please see action point 11.1

14 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 Parts 1 & 2
The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Architectural Association Experimental Programme and the Architectural Association Diploma Programme.
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 Parts 1 & 2 and Professional Criteria at part 3

The Board confirmed that all the Parts 1 and 2 graduate criteria were met by graduates of the Architectural Association Experimental Programme and the Architectural Association Diploma Programme. The Board confirmed that all the Professional Criteria at part 3 were met by graduates of the Architectural Association Professional Practice & Practical Experience Examination.

Other information

Student numbers

Part One: The AA Intermediate Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 1) (three years full-time) 2019-20 cohort: 306 students

Part Two: The AA Final Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 2) (two years full-time) 2019-20 cohort: 248 students

Part Three: The AA Professional Practice & Practical Experience Examination: 82 students (Autumn 2019 cohort: 38 students; Spring 2020 cohort: 44 students)

Documentation provided

The faculty provided all advance documentation in accordance with the validation procedures.

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