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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to  
the Manchester School of Architecture**

**Date of visiting board: 9/10 June 2016**

**Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 21 September 2016**

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- 1**      **Details of institution hosting course/s**      **(report part A)**  
 Manchester School of Architecture  
 Chatham Building  
 Cavendish Street  
 Manchester  
 M15 6BR
- 2**      **Head of Architecture Group**  
 Prof. Tom Jefferies
- 3**      **Course/s offered for revalidation**  
 BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One  
 Master of Architecture, Part Two
- 4**      **Course leader/s**  
 BA (Hons) Architecture      Richard Brook  
 Master of Architecture      Sally Stone
- 5**      **Awarding body**  
 MMU & UoM
- 6**      **The visiting board**  
 David Howarth      practitioner / Chair  
 Kathy Gal      practitioner/VC  
 Frazer Bufton      academic  
 Blair Macintyre      student  
 Prof. Doug King      co professional  
 Lisa Mcfarlane      Regional rep
- 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](http://www.architecture.com).
- 8**      **Proposals of the visiting board**  
 On 21 September 2016 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated.
- BA (Hons) Architecture, Part One**  
**Master of Architecture, Part Two**
- This proposal will be submitted to the RIBA Education Committee for ratification, and subsequent notification to RIBA Council.
- The next RIBA visiting board will take place in: 2021

**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 Manchester School of Architecture is a space and place for leading edge thinking, innovation and practice in architecture, connecting centres of excellence in art and design and urban social science. Our students become architects that are professional and socially aware, connected to and able to influence wide-ranging networks.

Our work starts from the city, is of the city, and develops the understanding of the conceptual and physical limits of the urban. Connected internationally, nationally, regionally and locally, global reach with a clear understanding of place underpins our approach to the practice of architecture. The School promotes open-ended enquiry, believing in the cultural value of architecture as an optimistic and expansive discipline.

In 2016-17 the School celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> year. We are a large internationally diverse, highly successful collaboration between Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester. Our academically excellent students come from a wide range of backgrounds to join innovative high quality design programmes that are supported by a rich, plural academic and institutional context.

Devolved staff and students responsibility promotes our ethos of professionalism, supported by well-developed networks and extensive external collaboration. We are committed to academic and professional disciplinary excellence that supports collaborative and trans-disciplinary practice with a wide network of partners, both within and beyond our institutional context. Students actively engage with numerous collaborative projects throughout their academic career. This includes innovative units such as 'Events' where Part 2 and Part 1 student teams develop projects (24 in 2015-16) that are co-designed with our partners, then delivered in the city and beyond. Networks are developed through planned events including 'Employer Cafés' where numerous leading practices and organisations connect with the School, embodying the wide range of opportunities that define contemporary architectural practice. Connections established within the School are

the basis for future careers and collaborations whilst enriching and developing the curriculum and our research.

## **Enquiry**

The expectation and development of professional behaviours in our students promotes the autonomous individual within a wider collective community. We believe research-based enquiry, built upon wide ranging and extensive subject foundations, is crucial to the practice of architecture. Connecting taught courses and research reflects and reinforces this relationship.

Our professional courses support the acquisition of design and research skills and their testing and refinement, with an academic structure designed to enable staff research groups to connect to the curriculum as a manifestation of the linkage between research and practice. Part 1 and Part 2 connect with each other, informing design studio practice and offering a supportive academic environment for all. Our innovative elective 'Research Studio' units use design as a tool to work directly with live research questions. Critical enquiry and new knowledge is developed through these studios and formal written formats including the dissertation.

We thematically align areas of design and academic practice to grand challenges and research funding council themes, including sustainability, wellbeing, heritage, history, anthropology and advanced digital practice. Students navigate their way through this rich context by a process of informed choice. Our scale offers opportunities to engage with wide ranging architectural issues and networks whilst recognising the individual as a critical part of the whole. Progression through the course offers increasingly particular and specialist opportunities, providing smaller scale focused and supportive groups and environments within a wider community.

We believe in diversity and choice as drivers for innovation. We acknowledge the scope of opportunity that architectural education provides and encourage interrogation of limits to identify opportunities for innovation. Architecture is understood as a basis from which to develop wider conversations that can connect across disciplinary boundaries when appropriate.

## **Environment**

Our RIBA award winning Manchester School of Art building gives high quality fluidly evolving spaces in five types, instrumental to the delivery of our academic ethos and organised to support our pedagogy:

Atelier Studio: Managed and organised by students for model making, digital and analogue drawing, this promotes occupation and establishment of collaborative cross-School peer groups.

Review Studio: Timetabled and controlled by the School, this is used on a rotating basis (normally daily) specifically for formal discussion and review of work.

Workshop: High quality making at all scales is supported by large well-equipped specialist workshops. Students work with trained technical staff to produce technically specific and complex outputs. The model is both a developmental and representational tool.

Lecture: A wide range of large and smaller digitally equipped lecture theatres across both university estates support delivery of formal and open lectures and events.

Library: Excellent 24/7 library resources, supported by specialist architectural librarians, enable access to a vast amount of recently published and archival material. IT systems support working away from the main Studios when appropriate.

## **Process**

Design studio practice inhabits the border between analogue and digital methods. We have pioneered digital methods of both production and assessment, whilst believing the physical manifestation of architecture is important to its understanding. Model making is a crucial aspect of design development. Dialogue between staff, students and technical teams inform the acquisition of new equipment to develop opportunity and capacity for innovation.

## **Practice**

The design studio is a research tool through which concepts of practice are tested. The ecology of practice is complex and demands a dynamic understanding of its condition. There is a dynamic relationship between 'Professional Practice' and the studio. We continually reassess appropriate forms of input and output from our taught courses to develop the scope and depth of practice as a form of academic exploration that is implicitly connected to the idea of professionalism.

## **Professionalism**

We connect with diverse areas of architecture, believing that all aspects of architectural education are valuable, rich sources of knowledge. The Manchester School of Architecture is an exploratory space that develops skills, talent and potential to shape future practice. Our work places architectural education into an issue driven and crosscutting framework for its deployment and development through high-level practice as a critically informed problem based research activity.

We embody professionalism as a mode of practice contextualised by the discipline of architecture. This shapes the development of the profession by connecting architecture to society. Our scope empowers students and graduates to engage with and develop new, emergent or existing models of practice to drive architecture forwards as a societally relevant art.

**11 Commendations**

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the richness and diversity of the school.
- 11.2 The board commends the ethos of transparency, openness and sharing across the school.
- 11.3 The board commend the ambition and achievements of Studio 4.1 workshops.

**12 Conditions**

There are no conditions:

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

- 13.1 The school continue to ensure that final year M Arch students across all ateliers have sufficient time to achieve appropriate levels of design resolution arising from equivalently complex levels of enquiry.

**14. 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

- 14.1 The board recognises the objectives of the dynamic mapping system and how it is used by the course team to manage and develop the programmes. The board advises that it is still necessary to communicate the structure of the courses in a concise and comprehensible way.
- 14.2 The school should continue to in its ambition encourage all students to apply the depth of knowledge acquired from the humanities, technology and professional studies units to their design projects.
- 14.3 The school is encouraged to explore further collaboration between courses beyond the school of architecture across both institutions.
- 14.4 The school is encouraged to develop digital academic portfolios to fully represent the breadth and quality of the work seen in the exhibition.
- 14.5 The school is encouraged to revise the academic position statement to celebrate the clearly evident culture and diversity of the school and its place in the City of Manchester.

**15 Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted: please see advice point 14.5

**16 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 and 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Programme of Architecture.

**17 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 and 2**

The Board confirmed that all of the Parts 1 and 2 graduate criteria were met by graduates of the Programme of Architecture.

**18 Other information**

**18.1 Student numbers**

At the time of the 2016 RIBA visiting board:

Manchester School of Architecture Part 1 and Part 2 Student Population by Year											
Date	Part 1					Part 2					Pt 1+Pt2 Cohort
	Year	M	F	T	Cohort	Year	M	F	T	Cohort	
2015-16	Year 1	75	87	162	481	Year 1	65	48	113	194	675
	Year 2	77	77	154		Year 2	38	43	81		
	Year 3	66	99	165							

**18.2 Documentation provided**

See advice points 14.1 and 14.4.

The board also noted that for future RIBA visiting boards, the school should only include necessary documentation as listed by the RIBA procedures. All other paperwork should be made available in the base room.

**19 Notes of meetings**

**\*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**

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- **Head of institution**
  - **External examiners**
  - **Staff**