
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to the University of Huddersfield**

School of Art, Design and Architecture

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**
The School of Art, Design & Architecture
University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
- 2 Dean**
Professor Michail Kaglioglu

Head of Department
Professor Patricia Tzortzopoulos

Architecture Co-ordinator
Carl Meddings
- 3 Courses offered for validation**
Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture
Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture (International)
Part 2 M.Arch
Part 2 M.Arch (International)
Part 3 Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice and
Management in Architecture
- 4 Course leaders**
Dr Yun Gao: BA (Hons) Architecture/Architecture (International) Part
1
Gerard Bareham: MArch/MArch (International) Part 2
Derrie O’Sullivan: Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice
and Management in Architecture
- 5 Awarding body**
University of Huddersfield
- 6 The visiting board**
Neil Lamb – Chair
Professor Stephen Gage – Vice Chair
Negar Mihanyar
Carol Norton
Stacey Smith – graduate member
Michelle Pepin – co-professional member
Michael Wildblood – regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, Validation Manager – in attendance.
- 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 Proposals of the visiting board

On 31 May 2017 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed, by circulation, unconditional revalidation of the following:

- Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture
- Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture (International)
- Part 2 M.Arch
- Part 2 M.Arch (International)
- Part 3 Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice and Management in Architecture

The next full 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 (written by the School)

Context and Distinctiveness

The study of architecture in Huddersfield was formalised in 1921 by the establishment of a course in the School of Art, one of the forerunners of the present University. Degrees in Architecture have been offered since 1977 and the current pattern of education stems from the establishment of the BA (Hons) Architecture (International) course in 1989. The Department of Architecture and 3D Design is one of three departments in The School of Art, Design and Architecture.

Huddersfield University is ranked 8th in the Guardian League Table of Architecture courses (2016). In addition to the professionally-recognised Architecture courses at Part 1, 2 and 3, the Department also offers a BSc in Architectural Technology, a BA (Hons) in Interior Design, a BA/BSc (Hons) in Product Design, a BSc (Hons) in Construction Project Management and a BSc (Hons) in Building Surveying as well as Master's-level degrees in Advanced Architectural Design, Urban Design, Sustainable Architecture, Advanced Construction and Project Management and Design Integration and Building Information Modelling.

The Department's overarching vision is to provide excellence in teaching and research in Architecture, Design and the Built Environment, playing a leading through creativity and innovation.

The following core values are central to this vision:

- *Nurturing critical thinking and practice through a student centred learning*
- *environment with inspirational staff*
- *Industry focussed and practice led approach*
- *Trust and commitment creating long term relationships*

The broad educational aims and aspirations of the subject-area are to produce enterprising and resourceful individuals, who will not only be well equipped to provide creativity in design and construction, but will also be pragmatic and adaptable in order to be able to cope with changes in the professional environment and in society's values and priorities.

In 2014, the Department established three Research Centres: the Innovative Design Lab (IDL), the Centre for Urban Design, Architecture and Sustainability (CUDAS) and the Global Centre for Disaster Resilience(GCDR). Each of our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is aligned to a Research Centre, thus enabling our students to be exposed to leading edge research in their areas of work and to foster their own research capabilities. The professionally-recognised Architecture programmes are aligned to CUDAS.

We are dedicated to the development and maintenance of appropriate and sustainable relationships between people and places, between society, technology and the environment, and between established cultures and the dynamically-changing modern world. It is seen as particularly important that our students should develop a high degree of sensitivity to the context within which they design. Our programmes, therefore, adopt a wide and plural outlook in which contemporary theories and applications of design, advanced technologies and building programmes, co-exist with a concern for sustainable development and a respect for traditional craft-based building construction processes and practice.

The architecture courses are studio based. Students work collaboratively within the design studio, which engenders a rich community of practice whereby students of all levels communicate in a supportive, sociable and open environment. At the time of writing the School is developing plans for a new building (scheduled for completion in October 2019) which is based around the current studio-focussed delivery, but which will also bring together students from a wide range of Art, Design, Architecture and Built Environment courses, including Product Design, Textile Design, Interior Design, Fashion, Graphics, Photography, Animation. The £28m new facility also includes new investment in a broader range of shared resources for hard and soft materials, printing, computing, photography, high end graphics, VR and other audio visual systems, including a state of the art 3D, video and graphics suite called the Phidias Lab, which houses emerging

technologies in digital arts, fashion, 3D technology, architecture and the built environment.

Teaching and Learning - Towards Professional Practice

Part 1

The Part 1 course has two named awards: BA (Hons) Architecture and BA (Hons) Architecture (International). The approach that the course takes to develop the basic graduate attributes is highly distinctive, being routed in the exploration, evaluation and response to context.

Students' expertise in architectural and urban design and the integration of technology is developed through a progression of studio modules, each lasting for one Term, which focus on developing the ideas and skills appropriate to each level of the course, culminating in a Comprehensive Design Project at the end of the Third Year. The 'International' degree is unique at undergraduate level and is preceded by an immersive Field Study in a non-European location. Recent visits include China, India, Malaysia and Vietnam. Design Studio projects are developed in the studio through tutorial discussions, and interim/staged reviews, with a series of weekly complementary workshops that are designed to tackle generic themes as design studies evolve

The central theme is that architecture is a narrative response to context, expressed through material, spatial, formal and environmental design. Critical analysis and evaluation are key skills in the examination of context, and critical techniques of representation are vital in synthesising findings into a legible architectural response, and communicating an articulate, tectonic composition.

Teaching and learning is project driven. Students explore architectural design in ever greater degrees of complexity throughout the design studio modules, which account for half the credits in each year; starting with intensely-supported introductory studies in First Year, through the development of critical skills and integrated-thinking skills in Second Year, to a position of self-directed and independent learning in final year as preparation for undertaking architectural practice and further studies. Non-design modules are lecture/seminar based with separate coursework assessments, designed to underpin and augment the adjacent development of design skills.

Part 2

The Part 2 course incorporates the practice-based 'year out' between Part 1 and Part 2, comprising a single pass/fail module in Year 1, and leading to two years of full-time academic study (Years 2 and 3) at Masters level in which students develop maturity and reflection, so that they learn how to manage design processes in preparation for the highly complex activity of professional practice. The course also has two named awards: Master of Architecture and Master of Architecture (International). The 'International' award builds upon the BA(Hons) Architecture (International) degree at Huddersfield and responds to the need for graduates to be prepared to work in a variety of global professional contexts.

Although design is the core activity in years 2 and 3, the development of specialist expertise in other areas is encouraged, and all projects (whether based in UK/Europe or the wider international context) are expected to explore applications of sustainability. There are 4 x 30 credit modules in year 2: Integrated Urban Design and Architecture, Advanced and Sustainable Technology, Advanced Architecture: Theory and Practice and Architectural Practice, Management and Law. At the end of Year 2, students elect (after academic counselling) whether to undertake the International award and all students begin preparation for their Dissertation and Design Thesis.

Year 3 offers students the opportunity to operate independently, critically reflect and synthesize knowledge acquired from the subject areas of previous modules. Students undertake a 10,000-word Dissertation at the beginning of the year in which they must demonstrate intellectual rigour, methodical investigation, and a deep engagement within an area of specialised study. The year concludes with a Design Thesis, which comprises the integrated design resolution of a complex building responding to a location, typology and programme of the students own choice.

Students who elect to follow the 'International' route will choose for their Design Thesis, a non-European location. Both routes place emphasis upon development of an appropriate regional and environmental response to the project's location, but the International route also provides students with an opportunity to develop a sensitive response to an unfamiliar culture.

Tuition in year 2 follows a similar pattern to the undergraduate course, but with less emphasis on exploration of generic issues in a workshop format and more emphasis on collaborative and peer learning, particularly in the Integrated Urban Design and Architecture module where there is an emphasis in the early stages on group work.

In Year 3 students are allocated personal supervisors, who offers guidance on dissertation and design development. In addition, students attend weekly design tutorials with the course tutors and at 6 key stages students present their work to an invited panel of practitioners (from practices in the region). This is felt to be a key aspect of the course, providing an opportunity for design development and advice in relation to pragmatics of building procurement as well as honing students' presentational skills prior to undertaking practical training at Part 3.

Part 3

The Part 3 course is a stand-alone Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice and Management in Architecture and is managed by a Professional Studies Advisor working alongside students in architectural practice. The course is primarily practice based, with office visits from a dedicated professional practice tutor and a one week intensive refresher course. Students undertake the following:

- *A Case Study of 6000 words on a 'live' project that the student has been involved in.*

- *Personal Evaluation of experience (a report equivalent in scope to 2,500 words).*
- *Professional Experience and Development Record as required by RIBA for Part 3 entry.*
- *A professional Curriculum Vitae.*
- *A scenario(s)-based assignment - demonstrating Knowledge and Understanding of architectural and professional issues and appreciation of and reaction to practice based problems, undertaken in open-book condition in the candidate's office.*
- *Professional Interview - A viva voce examination - A personal presentation and response to external examiners questions regarding the scenario-based assignment, professional experience and broader professional issues.*

Overall

The aims and outcomes of different award levels are articulated in each Programme Specification and are designed to develop graduates with the appropriate graduate attributes at each level. Part 1 allows students to develop the basics of spatial organisation and response to context. At Part 2 the course is more focussed on material tectonics, the resolution of architecture in detail in response to its physical context and more deeply considered theoretical agendas. Work at this stage is expected to be produced to a standard of resolution that pertains in professional architectural practice. Part 3 is focussed on the development of professional experience.

Crucially, at Huddersfield we aim to provide an environment in which students learn how to learn, in order to be fully prepared for the necessity of Continuing Professional Development and to be flexible and adaptive to the requirements of the constantly evolving professional workplace and the demands of an ever-changing world. We support students to be able to work as global practitioners. We are dedicated to the processes of learning architecture and the ways in which we can deliver an exceptional programme of study in a changing educational and professional landscape.

11 Commendations

- 11.1 The Board commends the engaged, articulate and constructive student body.
- 11.2 The Board commends the continuing high standard of the Part 3.
- 11.3 The Board commends the collegiate nature of the architecture department staff and their collective experience and knowledge in structuring and delivering successful and distinctive architecture courses.
- 11.4 The Board commends the commitment of the Department to an international perspective.

- 11.5 The Board commends the staff commitment to the architecture programme and their high level of pastoral care to the students at all levels.
- 11.6 The Board commends the planned investment by the University in providing a new facility for the architecture department. This is an excellent opportunity for staff and students to be involved in and learn from the design process from briefing to completion.

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

- 13.1 The Board recommends that the Department ensure that students are aware of the research centres in the Department and across the School and all students should be made aware of the research specialism of every member of research-active staff to better inform teaching and learning.
- 13.2 The Department must ensure that students receive inductions to all workshop and digital facilities in the School as appropriate to their work.
- 13.3 The Board encourages the School to consider the role of optional field trips and, where these are an integral part of the curricula, to embed these within module specifications.

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 encourages more rigour in the resolution of building plans and sections in comprehensive design projects at all levels, for example, issues of accessibility should be covered.
- 14.2 Research-active staff in the School should be regarded as a consultancy pool for individual students at Master's level to extend the available knowledge base for students.
- 14.3 The Department should consider reducing the extent to which some design projects are mapped onto all criteria, to allow students to investigate specific aspects of their work in greater depth.

- 14.4 The Department should formalise consistent assessment and feedback processes , including the assessment of group work, through articulation of a strategy that builds upon existing good practice in the Department.
- 14.5 The Board advises the Department to review and reflect upon the future direction and development of the International routes so as to ensure parity of opportunity and appropriate technical support for all students.
- 14.6 The Board encourages the Department to seek and develop opportunities for interdisciplinary learning as it prepares for the new building.
- 14.7 The Board advises that teaching staff who are experienced designers and wish to become research-active are mentored in practice-based research so that a high standard of design teaching can be maintained in the Department.

15 Delivery of academic position

The following key points were noted:

It was felt that whilst the academic position statement provides the required general context to the Department and its Courses that some mention should be made of the new building and recent success in national league tables.

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.

The Board confirmed that the Graduate Attributes for Part 1 were met by the graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture/BA (Hons) Architecture (International) programme.

The Board confirmed that the Graduate Attributes for Part 2 were met by the graduates of the MArch/MArch (International) programme.

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.

The Board made no further comments.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

Part 1: 180

Part 2: 80

Part 3: 20

18.2 Documentation provided

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

19. 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 mid-term panel and the next full visiting board.**

- Meeting with budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the Vice Chancellor and Dean
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff