
Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA visiting board
to Hull College**

Hull School of Art and Design

Date of visiting board: 13 & 14 December 2018

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 13 February 2019

Notified to RIBA Board: 14 February 2019

1 Details of institution hosting course/s

Hull College
Queen's Gardens
Hull
HU1 3DG

2 Chief Executive Officer, Hull College

Michelle Swithenbank

Head of Architecture and Course Director

Richard Wright

3. Courses offered for validation

BA (Hons) Architecture
Master of Architecture

4. Awarding body

The Open University

5. The visiting board

Martin Pearce – Chair
Dr Gul Kacmaz Erk
Simon Gratton

One of the board members was unable to attend due to ill-health. The visit proceeded with the agreement of the RIBA Director of Education and the Hull College Head of Architecture.

In attendance

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – validation manager

Observing

David Gloster, RIBA Director of Education

6. 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.

7. Conclusions of the visiting board

The Board has rigorously examined the evidence presented by the School according to the RIBA Procedures for Validation and with regard to the RIBA Graduate Attributes and General Criteria.

BA(Hons) Architecture Part 1

At its meeting on 13 February 2019, the RIBA Education Committee confirmed:

The withdrawal of validation of the BA(Hons) Architecture course, on the following grounds:

- 7.1 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to deliver the graduate attributes

- 7.2 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to address the validation criteria
- 7.3 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to meet required academic standards, or an appropriate quality student experience
- 7.4 there is immediate evidence of a shortfall in staffing to satisfy the Board that the full breadth and depth of the architectural curriculum can be and is being delivered.

Master of Architecture (MArch) Part 2

At its meeting on 13 February 2019, the RIBA Education Committee confirmed:

Removal of candidate course status of the MArch Part 2 course, on the following grounds that:

- 7.5 the action points and matters of advice set out by the Exploratory Board have been inadequately addressed
- 7.6 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to deliver the graduate attributes.
- 7.7 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to address the validation criteria.
- 7.8 there are serious concerns regarding the failure of the course to meet the required academic standards or provide an appropriate quality student experience.
- 7.9 there is immediate evidence of a shortfall in staffing to satisfy the Board that the full breadth and depth of the architectural curriculum can be delivered.

The Board has no criticism of the professionalism and commitment of the Head of Architecture and architecture staff, the enthusiasm or commitment of the students, and the investment in the refurbishment of the School premises.

However, the Board failed to find evidence that the College has adequate systems, resources and staffing made available to them by the College that would guarantee the rigorous and systematic upholding of standards and student learning experience in meeting the RIBA Graduate Attributes and General Criteria. This failure to adequately resource and support the operation of the architecture programme results in the Board having no confidence that the Criteria and Attributes can be met at the present time or at a time in the future that would allow ongoing validation of the BA(Hons) Architecture Part 1 or the ongoing candidate status of the MArch at Part 2 level.

8. Response to Visiting Board reports

The 2018 Board made reference to previous Visiting Board reports and sought to establish how Action Points had been addressed and matters of Advice had been considered by the institution as follows:

8.1 Part 1 BA (Hons) Architectural Design: Visiting Board report 2013 (paragraph numbers refer to those in the 2013 report)

Action Points

On the evidence presented to the 2018 Board the Institution had failed to adequately respond to the following action points:

- 13.2 *The School should review the way technology is taught, integrated and assessed as part of the comprehensive design project.*
- 13.4 *The School should ensure that the comprehensive design project more clearly evidences the use of a varied range of design development processes and techniques.*

Advice points

On the evidence presented to the 2018 Board the institution had failed to act on the following matters of advice which, whilst not essential might have significantly assisted in the course development and raised standards

- 14.1 *In light of developing the MArch and planned Part 2 provision the appointment of an additional course leader or design professor should be considered to assist academic leadership across all years.*
- 14.2 *Consideration should be given to how staff are supported in the initiation and development of their research.*

8.2 Part 1 BA (Hons) Architectural Design: Mid-term monitoring report 2016

The 2018 Board noted the School of Architecture's response included in the mid-term report. However, based on the evidence of the student work presented, the 2018 Board concluded that regards the Action Points 13.2 and 13.4 the School of Architecture had failed to adequately respond to them.

On the evidence of the student work presented, the Board concluded that the School of Architecture had failed to adequately respond to Advice Points 14.1 and 14.2, which, whilst not essential, might have significantly assisted in the course development and raised standards.

8.3 Part 2 Master of Architecture. Exploratory Board Report 2017 (paragraph numbers refer to those in the 2013 report)

Action Points

On the evidence presented to the Board, the Institution had failed to adequately respond to the following action points:

- 10.1 *The institution must clarify the management and academic leadership of the Subject Area of architecture for the MArch.*

10.3 *In preparation for the full visiting board in October 2018 the institution should adhere to the requirements regarding documentation as explicitly outlined in section 4 of the 2011 Procedures for Validation.*

10.4 *The Board notes the comments of the external examiners which proved very useful and would remind the institution to ensure that all work is retained in preparation for the October 2018 visiting board. The institution is referred to section 4.7 of the 2011 Procedures document which describes the RIBA's requirements for the presentation of complete academic portfolios and the portfolio sample. The institution's attention is drawn to section 6 of the Procedures document, which refers to grounds for suspension of visiting boards.*

10.5 *The institution must consolidate and rationalise the programme mapping and clarify length of modules and times of assessment both for full-time and part-time routes on the MArch.*

10.6 *The course team must ensure that the provision of technology for the student cohort conforms with level 7 and can be clearly articulated and demonstrated in the work presented to the full visiting board.*

10.7 *The course team must ensure that the provision of cultural context and critical theory for the student cohort conforms with level 7 and can be clearly articulated and demonstrated in the work presented to the full visiting board.*

10.8 *The course team must develop the breadth and specialist knowledge of the teaching provision to ensure current and innovative practice is offered to the student cohort.*

10.9 *The Board recommends that the institution engage an experienced external advisor from another validated school of architecture to support the institution in the preparation of documentation and portfolios for the full visiting board in October 2018.*

10.10 *The institution must address the shortfall in architecture provision in the College library.*

10.11 *The course team must ensure that the student cohort are aware of the Part 2 graduate attributes and criteria for validation and how these align to their individual learning contracts.*

Advice points

On the evidence presented to the Board, the Institution had failed to act on the following matters of advice, which, whilst not essential, might have significantly assisted in the course development and raised standards.

11.1 *The Board advises that the institution and course team establish a means for current MArch students to feed back on their learning experience to inform future course development.*

11.2 The Board advises that the institution and Subject Group Lead explore opportunities for collaboration between FE and HE provision; this is a unique situation with significant potential.

9. Delivery of graduate attributes

In considering delivery of the graduate attributes and the outcomes at both Part 1 and Part 2 the Board found significant failings in the quality assurance procedures of the College that would ensure the present and ongoing quality in delivering these attributes, in the staffing provision that would support the delivery of the attributes and in the quality of design work. Each of these aspects is described below, including the supporting evidence provided by constructional and environmental technology, history and theory, and professional skills submissions.

The Board referred to the previous visiting Board reports with regard to the required action points and the points of advice which, whilst not essential might have significantly assisted in the course in meeting the graduate attributes. In respect of these points of action and advice the Board found significant failings by the Institution in discharging actions and acting on the advice given by previous Board which are detailed below.

The Board sets out a commentary against the 11 points of the General Criteria identifying each aspect of their assessment of the work against the Criteria.

9.1 Part 1 Graduate Attributes

In the review of work against the Graduate Attributes for Part 1, the Board concluded that the following Graduate Attributes were not met:

GA1 With regard to meeting the eleven General Criteria, the Part 1 will be awarded to students who have:

- .1 ability to generate design proposals using understanding of a body of knowledge, some at the current boundaries of professional practice and the academic discipline of architecture;
- .2 ability to apply a range of communication methods and media to present design proposals clearly and effectively;
- .3 understanding of the alternative materials, processes and techniques that apply to architectural design and building construction;
- .4 ability to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions in order to make and present sound judgments within a structured discourse relating to architectural culture, theory and design;
- .5 knowledge of the context of the architect and the construction industry, and the professional qualities needed for decision making in complex and unpredictable circumstances; and
- .6 ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required for further professional education.

9.2 Part 2 Graduate Attributes

In the review of work against the Graduate Attributes for Part 2 the Board concluded that the following Graduate Attributes were not met:

GA2: With regard to meeting the eleven General Criteria at parts 1 and 2 above, the part 2 will be awarded to students who have:

.1 ability to generate complex design proposals showing understanding of current architectural issues, originality in the application of subject knowledge and, where appropriate, to test new hypotheses and speculations;

.2 ability to evaluate and apply a comprehensive range of visual, oral and written media to test, analyse, critically appraise and explain design proposals;

.3 ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals;

.4 critical understanding of how knowledge is advanced through research to produce clear, logically argued and original written work relating to architectural culture, theory and design;

.5 understanding of the context of the architect and the construction industry, including the architect's role in the processes of procurement and building production, and under legislation;

.6 problem solving skills, professional judgement, and ability to take the initiative and make appropriate decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances; and

.7 ability to identify individual learning needs and understand the personal responsibility required to prepare for qualification as an architect.

10. 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 General Criteria at RIBA Part 1 and RIBA part 2

In the review of work against the General Criteria at RIBA Part 1 and RIBA Part 2, the Board concluded that the following criteria were not met:

GC1 Ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements. The graduate will have the ability to:

.2 understand the constructional and structural systems, the environmental strategies and the regulatory requirements that apply to the design and construction of a comprehensive design project;

.3 develop a conceptual and critical approach to architectural design that integrates and satisfies the aesthetic aspects of a building and the technical requirements of its construction and the needs of the user.

Comment

The new programme sought to develop a conceptual and critical approach to architectural design GC1.3, however this was insufficient to demonstrate that the work at both Part 1 and Part 2 meet Criteria GC 1 in respect of GC1.2 and the latter part of GC1.3. The work showed little iterative process of testing and developing alternative structural and environmental strategies and an insufficient understanding of these aspects, together with the lack of analytical modelling and testing. Where technical consideration was evidenced this was largely through the analysis of case studies and the learning shown was not translated adequately into the students' own design projects.

GC3 Knowledge of the fine arts as an influence on the quality of architectural design. The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design;

.2 the creative application of the fine arts and their relevance and impact on architecture;

.3 the creative application of such work to studio design projects, in terms of their conceptualisation and representation.

Comment

The School is well placed in the context of an arts school to demonstrate how the theories, practices and technologies of the arts influence architectural design. The Board noted the investment that the Institution had made in refurbishing the Frederick Gibberd building, which improved the facilities enabling the synergies between the arts to develop.

GC5 Understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings and the spaces between them to human needs and scale. The graduate will have an understanding of:

.2 the impact of buildings on the environment, and the precepts of sustainable design;

Comment

The Board found insufficient evidence of the teaching or integration of sustainable design precepts and environmental impact of buildings on the environment. Whilst there was some environmental analysis shown at Part 1 relating to the Frederick Gibberd building, the Board failed to

see sufficient evidence of the analysis, testing and consideration of the environmental impact in the students' design projects at both Part 1 and Part 2 as an integrated and iterative process informing building design. Due consideration of the needs of people, both now and in the future, with regards sustainable design, was absent.

GC6 Understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, in particular in preparing briefs that take account of social factors. The graduate will have an understanding of:

- .1 the nature of professionalism and the duties and responsibilities of architects to clients, building users, constructors, co-professionals and the wider society;
- .2 the role of the architect within the design team and construction industry, recognising the importance of current methods and trends in the construction of the built environment;

Comment

There was insufficient evidence of the way in which the School prepares students for practice, the nature of professionalism and the duties and responsibilities of architects to clients, building users, constructors, co-professionals and the wider society. The students were inadequately informed as to the realities of architectural practice. There was insufficient evidence in both the BA and MArch that the School of Architecture prepares students for the role of the architect within the design team and construction industry.

GC7 Understanding of the methods of investigation and preparation of the brief for a design project. The graduate will have an understanding of:

- .3 the contributions of architects and co-professionals to the formulation of the brief, and the methods of investigation used in its preparation.

Comment

There was insufficient evidence of the contributions of architects and co-professionals to the formulation of the brief, and the methods of investigation used in its preparation. There was some analysis of precedent relevant to the design projects at Part 1 and Part 2, however the Board found little evidence in the portfolios at Part 1 and Part 2 of the way in which an architect prepares and investigates a brief.

GC8 Understanding of the structural design, constructional and engineering problems associated with building design. The graduate will have an understanding of:

- .1 the investigation, critical appraisal and selection of alternative structural, constructional and material systems relevant to architectural design;

.2 strategies for building construction, and ability to integrate knowledge of structural principles and construction techniques;

.3 the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, components and systems, and the environmental impact of specification choices.

Comment

The Board found insufficient evidence of the teaching or integration of the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, structures, components and systems and the environmental impact of specification choices. There was inadequate testing of alternative techniques as applied to design projects and whilst the new design programme had begun to implement the making and production of large scale models/installations the Board found insufficient evidence here, or in the BA and MArch portfolios.

GC9 Adequate knowledge of physical problems and technologies and the function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate, in the framework of sustainable development. The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 principles associated with designing optimum visual, thermal and acoustic environments;

.2 systems for environmental comfort realised within relevant precepts of sustainable design;

.3 strategies for building services, and ability to integrate these in a design project.

Comment

The Board found insufficient evidence of the students' ability at both Part 1 and Part 2 to understand the needs of buildings to act as environmental modifiers creating internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate. The Board found inadequate evidence of the thermal properties of materials and their testing, selection and application to design projects. There was insufficient evidence of the students having knowledge of, and integration of systems to modify the thermal, visual and acoustic environments of buildings. Whilst the current first year project was beginning to address some of these aspects in the later work and the portfolios provided the Board found insufficient evidence that these matters were being satisfactorily taught and evaluated through integration with the design projects.

GC10 The necessary design skills to meet building users' requirements within the constraints imposed by cost factors and building regulations. The graduate will have the skills to:

.1 critically examine the financial factors implied in varying building types, constructional systems, and specification choices, and the impact of these on architectural design;

.2 understand the cost control mechanisms which operate during the development of a project;

.3 prepare designs that will meet building users' requirements and comply with UK legislation, appropriate performance standards and health and safety requirements.

Comment

There was insufficient evidence in design work at both Part 1 and Part 2 that students are aware of the constraints of cost and statutory regulations on design projects and their relationship to the building users.

GC11 Adequate knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall planning. The graduate will have knowledge of:

.1 the fundamental legal, professional and statutory responsibilities of the architect, and the organisations, regulations and procedures involved in the negotiation and approval of architectural designs, including land law, development control, building regulations and health and safety legislation;

.2 the professional inter-relationships of individuals and organisations involved in procuring and delivering architectural projects, and how these are defined through contractual and organisational structures;

.3 the basic management theories and business principles related to running both an architects' practice and architectural projects, recognising current and emerging trends in the construction industry.

Comment

At both Part 1 and Part 2 there was insufficient evidence of students showing adequate knowledge of the industries, organisations, regulations and procedures involved in translating design concepts into buildings and integrating plans into overall project planning. As such the students seemed poorly prepared for practice. As the School of Architecture has a part-time provision, the link between practice and academy might have been further strengthened.

11. Commentary

11.1 Quality Assurance Procedures

The Board found there to be serious failings in the quality assurance procedures of the College as follows:

Through the documentary submission and its meeting with an external examiner the Board concluded that the College Institution had failed to adequately respond to external examiners reports, to the effect that there was no response document for the year 2017/18 and a failure to provide external examiners with a response to their reports. In addition,

the College Institution had failed to provide external examiners with adequate briefing documents in the form of assessments and criteria.

There was a failure to provide students with module descriptors, briefing documents and course level handbooks (or similar) and the current module structure comprising semester long units was not being taught in accordance with the course structure set out in the documentary submission.

The College had failed to provide the documentary submission to the Board in accordance with the time frame required by the validation procedures: documents submitted by email had arrived in digital format some 3 working days prior to the commencement of the visit and not as is required in hard copy 3 weeks prior to the visit.

Whilst module specifications were made available to the Board on arrival these had remained largely extant from the previous year 2017/8 and did not adequately set out the course content or provide detailed briefs of the design course as it was currently being delivered.

The RIBA Visiting Board process is evidence driven and the institution had failed to retain the full range of portfolios required by the validation procedures for evaluation by the board.

11.2 Staffing

The Board found there to be inadequate staffing provision and could not be confident that the current provision was satisfactory, or would become satisfactory in the immediate future, to support students such that they could meet the Graduate Attributes and General Criteria at Part 1 and Part 2.

With significant numbers of teaching staff accepting voluntary severance in the School of Architecture at the end of the 2017/8 cohort, the Institution had failed to implement an effective accession planning strategy to maintain continuity of student experience. One fractional member of academic staff continued from the period before the voluntary severance agreements. This staff member had been away on long term sickness at the beginning of the current session and the Institution had failed to provide teaching cover.

At the time of the visit the majority of the curriculum across the BA (Hons) Architecture and MArch provision was being taught by the new Head of School of Architecture, the continuing fractional member of staff on long term sickness leave and one new fractional member of teaching staff. This was deemed by the Board an inadequate level of support and teaching to meet the Graduate Attributes and Criteria both now and into the future.

The Board received no assurances that additional staffing would be provided by the Institution to meet this shortcoming as the senior management team stated that no new staff would be appointed without an increase in student numbers.

The Board also concluded that the level of staffing provided insufficient capacity to meet the developmental needs of staff and to facilitate research and scholarly activity in the School.

External examiners' reports and advice from previous visiting board reports had consistently raised the importance of external critics providing a vital role in the ability for students to develop greater critical reflection of their work and for the School to benchmark standards. The Board found that insufficient staffing resources were available for such external critical inputs. External examiners had also emphasised the value of student study visits as an important way in which students can broaden their architectural understanding and aspirations, however the Board saw insufficient evidence of such visits.

Previous board reports had encouraged the strengthening of links with other courses within the Institution and whilst within the Hull School of Art and Design the students benefited from interaction with other staff members and students from allied disciplines the synergies across other disciplines within the College, which might have supported the insufficiencies in technology teaching and learning remained undeveloped.

11.3 Standard of design work

The portfolios examined by the Board presented a series of pragmatic projects showing consideration for local context including the physical urban conditions of Hull and the Region and demonstrated some concern for the social context in which architecture is made recently drawing on the events and celebrations surrounding Hull's UK City of Culture status in 2017. However, the standard of the work in the portfolios in ambition, technical resolution and graphic communication was of an insufficient standard at both Part 1 and Part 2 to meet the Graduate Attributes and General Criteria.

The appointment of a new Head of Architecture has brought a redirection of the design programme built on the ideas of transcription (mainly Bernard Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts). This is at an embryonic stage in the work presented from the current cohort. Whilst giving a strong theoretical direction to the design work, there was little evidence in respect of technology (particularly environmental and sustainable design) and the areas of management, practice and law along with the preparedness of students for architectural practice.

12. Other information

12.1 Student numbers

BA (Hons) Architecture - 28
MArch – 10

12.2 Documentation provided

The Board has commented under section 11.1 "Quality Assurance procedures" about the documentation provided to the Board prior to and during the visit.

13. Notes of meetings

On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings. **The comments recorded are those made by the attendees representing the institution and do not represent the opinions of the visiting board.**

- Meeting with budget holder and course leader
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the head of institution
- Meeting with external examiner by teleconference
- Meeting with staff
- Meeting with the University of Hull