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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA visiting board  
to Liverpool John Moores University**

School of Art and Design

Date of visiting board: 15/16 June 2017

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 20 September 2017

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**1 Details of institution hosting course/s** (report part A)

Liverpool John Moores University  
School of Art and Design  
John Lennon Art and Design Building  
2 Duckinfield Street  
Liverpool  
L3 5RD

**2 Head of subject area**

Ian Wroot

**3 Courses offered for validation**

BA (Hons) Architecture Part 1  
Master of Architecture MArch Part 2

**4 Programme Director**

Ian Wroot

**5 Awarding body**

Liverpool John Moores University

**6 The visiting board**

Ivana Wingham – chair  
David Howarth - vice chair  
Peter Garstecki  
Ruth Reed  
Oliver Hall – student/graduate member  
Dr Jenny Thomas – co professional  
Matthew Ashton – 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](http://www.architecture.com).

**8 Proposals of the visiting board**

On 20 September 2017 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed, by circulation, that the following programmes be unconditionally revalidated:

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1  
Master of Architecture MArch, Part 2

The next full 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** (written by the School)

The Liverpool School of Art & Design (LSAD) is situated in the John Lennon Art & Design Building (JLADB), a modern purpose-designed resource in the heart of Liverpool's Knowledge Quarter. LSAD is the oldest school of art and design in England outside London, dating back to 1825, when it started life as the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute with the purpose of providing education to working men. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century LSAD had established a broader range of subjects and incorporated architecture (est.1958), and the move to the new building in 2008 enabled the school to bring together all its disciplines and exploit the practical and creative opportunities arising from the interaction between creative subjects. The new location provided a vibrant and exceptional teaching and learning environment for up to 1200 students, including advanced facilities and innovative technology.

Our dedicated studios provide uplifting and spacious environments with inspirational views over the city. The building also houses public galleries, a large adaptable auditorium and a series of social spaces that serve as a platform for the activities of the school and a hub for national and international cultural and creative exchanges. The JLADB also includes a number of workshops that combine state-of-the-art digital design, 3D fabrication technology and printing, textiles and imaging facilities alongside more traditional methods of production and construction. This enables the combination of teaching and work-related learning with practical knowledge, producing graduates that are ready for employment in a competitive, flexible and challenging workplace. Teaching embraces a variety of different modes of delivery, such as tutorials, seminars, live projects, lectures, practical sessions, debates, on-line resources, drop-in clinics, social events and pop-ups. Research in LSAD is organised around labs that have developed around key research active academics; these labs address real-world issues and collaborate across disciplines. Our research informs our curriculum and underpins our teaching.

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Following Liverpool's recognition as the European City of Culture in 2008, the city has continued to build on its status as the most significant place for art and design activity in the UK outside London. Liverpool has transformed itself through major building and urban development projects into which our students have had and continue to have a significant influence, and the university has pioneered civic influence through its cultural partnerships across the city, including the joint academic posts with Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial and FACT. A new joint post for the architecture team and RIBA North was set up in 2015 and these posts develop creative and engaging research, generate impact and knowledge exchange and provide a backdrop for our courses. The combination of [Tate Liverpool](#), [Liverpool Biennial](#), [FACT](#), [Bluecoat](#), [Philharmonic](#), [RIBA North](#), Metal, Everyman, and many other leading arts, design and cultural organisations provide an important and productive set of collaborations for our students.

*LJMU leads the way among UK universities with this far-sighted and enriching programme of cultural and artistic engagement for its students. It's a truly life-changing opportunity for every student to get involved in the arts.* Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England

In addition, Liverpool has recently become recognised for socially engaged art, co-design and creative enterprise, through in part the activity of creative consortia like *Assemble* (2015 Turner prize winners), *The Office of Useful Art* and *Uses of Art*, all of which have leaders/members who are academic staff within the school. In all these ways, the school, the university and the city provide distinctive possibilities for students to engage socio-culturally and have contemporary relevance universally.

Over the past five years the Architecture team has focused on:

### **A more holistic approach to learning and teaching**

Across both programmes, we have integrated holistic course delivery within two stage design modules that imbed historical, theoretical, technical and environmental support studies within enquiry-based projects. At undergraduate level, predominantly, the city of Liverpool is used as a contextual laboratory to test concepts that have a local flavour with global implications. The postgraduate studio offers opportunities for explorations further afield. In all cases, programmatic ambitions emanate from a thorough analysis of and intuitive response to place.

The over-arching ambition of our programmes is to create graduates with artistic flair who engage in divergent, creative and critical thought processes that are also technically skilled and grounded in the demands of the professional role of the architect.

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### **Embedding research into teaching**

There is a deliberate strategy to interweave research and teaching within the programme, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This manifests both through how research informs teaching to inspire and nourish our students' learning, but also how studio teaching and emergent project work can contribute to published research in a range of contemporary fields and problems in wider contexts; an approach that has been termed 'teaching-informed research'. We strive to host one internationally refereed conference and one symposium each year that address themes to inspire studio activities at all levels. In the last two years we have hosted two housing conferences with resulting refereed publications. Symposia have explored themes relating to 'starchitect' led urban regeneration; space, film & architecture; the display, exhibition and propagation of architecture.

### **Encouraging cross disciplinary collaboration & forging international links**

The university has an ambition to offer an international experience to all students. The school has a range of student exchange programmes and travel bursaries. In the last three years Architecture students have studied in Shanghai, Seoul, Aarhus, Graz & Pecs' through these exchanges. We run workshops abroad each year in the BA and MArch programme. These often facilitate projects abroad in collaboration with foreign universities and local authorities such as in Porto, Marseille, Hamburg & Genoa with published outputs.

### **The exploration of emerging technologies**

We encourage our students to explore new technologies in the creation, communication and dissemination of their project outputs. We engage with a number of online publishing sites to facilitate this. We have piloted individual student, smart device enabled timetabling technologies and researched the efficacy of utilising digital mobile devices technologies in studio environments. We engage with fabricators and contractors in knowledge exchange projects and often collaborate with external partners within our studios.

### **Engagement with the profession**

We have a commitment to have a practitioner alongside an academic in every design review (crit) at all levels that take place in the school so that our students have continual contact with industry experts. The Head of Architecture is currently President of the Liverpool Architecture Society (two other academic staff are past presidents), Chair of the RIBA Merseyside Branch and sits on various RIBA NW regional committees. We have a collaborative post with the RIBA North to strengthen research links with the profession. We engage in *Northern Soul*, a design charrette involving students and staff from northern schools each year, organised by the RIBA NW. We also host RIBA NW CPD events regularly within our building. We have a practice mentoring scheme for work place shadowing and professional development guidance

for our Level 6 students and a university funded practice placement internship programme.

**11. Commendations**

- 11.1 The Board commends Architecture staff for their collegiate approach to course delivery and strong commitment to the student experience.
- 11.2 The Board commends the School of Art and Design for its continuing civic engagement with the city region through strong links to its cultural institutions.
- 11.3 The Board commends the Architecture Programme's focus on urban design projects across a range of scales evident in the work of MArch students.

**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 It is the requirement of the RIBA that complete academic portfolios of the award years be available to External Examiners at the end of academic year. The Board recommends that the Programme team reviews the impact of the new semester structure on this requirement.

**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 welcomes the diverse approaches to 2D representation. It advises the Architecture Programme to encourage greater exploration of 3D physical modelling and materiality at Part 1 and Part 2.
- 14.2 The Board advises the Architecture Programme to further exploit the advantages of craft and innovative media processes located within the School of Art and Design embedding making as a key component of Design modules.
- 14.3 The Board advises the Architecture Programme to explore routes to enhanced delivery of Management Practice and Law (MPL) at Part 1 and Part 2, through engagement with Practice and Live Projects in order to increase student appreciation of the subject area.

14.4 The Board advises Part 2 of the Architecture Programme to review the new location of MPL within the course to facilitate direct relevance to English legislation and enable more exploratory approaches to CDP.

14.5 The Board advises the Architecture Programme to consider reducing the number of components within modules to enable more experimentation and speculation within design projects.

**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.

**15.1 BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1**

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met.

**15.2 MArch, Part 2**

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met.

**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.

16.1 The Board made no further comments.

**17 Other information**

**17.1 Student numbers**

BA (Hons) Architecture, Part 1: 220

MArch, Part 2: 90

**17.2 Documentation provided**

The School provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

**18. 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
- Meeting with external examiners
- Meeting with staff