

**Report of the RIBA visiting board  
University of the West of England**

- 1 **Details of institution hosting courses**  
University of the West of England  
Department of Architecture and the Built Environment  
Faculty of Environment and Technology  
Frenchay Campus  
Coldharbour Lane  
Bristol BS18 1QY
  
- 2 **Head of Architecture**  
Elena Marco – Head of Department Architecture and the Built Environment  
James Burch – Associate Head of Department for Architecture
  
- 3 **Courses offered for revalidation**  
Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning  
Part 1 B.Eng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering  
Part 2 MArch  
Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in Architecture
  
- 4 **Course leaders**  
James Burch (at the time of the visit) & Mike Devereux: Part 1BA (Hons)  
Architecture and Planning  
Paul Kirby: Part 1, B.Eng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering  
Rachel Sara: Part 2 MArch  
Wendy Colvin: Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management  
in Architecture
  
- 5 **Awarding body**  
The University of the West of England
  
- 6 **The visiting board**  
Derek Cottrell - Chair  
Tina Frost - Vice-chair  
Ben Cowd  
Alison Mackinder  
Blair Macintyre – student/graduate member  
Mike Packham – co-professional member  
Andy Crabb – 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**  
At its meeting on 7 October 2015 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional revalidation of:  
  
Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning  
Part 1 BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering  
Part 2 MArch  
Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in Architecture

The next full visiting board to the UWE programmes listed above will take place in 2020.

NB: The BSc (Hons) Architecture programme (RIBA Candidate Course for Part 1) was not reviewed by the present Board as it is being considered under the RIBA New Course procedures. A full visiting board to the BSc (Hons) Architecture programme should take place in 2016.

**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 idea that the making of good places and buildings – at all scales– is a co-operative enterprise is fundamental to our academic culture and our portfolio of courses. Architectural education at UWE Bristol is conceived as an integral part of an inter-disciplinary approach to professional scholarship. We are conscious that the established professions and disciplines are constantly evolving and that our role as educators is to enable future practitioners to develop the understanding and empathy that facilitates working creatively across traditional boundaries as well as to impart the essential knowledge and high-level skills that are particular to each discipline.*

*We understand that the profession of architecture sits within an expanded field of scholarship in environmental design. These expanded opportunities for education and professional work range in scale from urban place making, through the technology and poetics of building design, to the intimate consideration of the objects and experiences that contribute to interior spaces. We understand these scales of thinking to be interlinked, and that each scale carries with it particular methods and skills that are not always within the general purview of the professional architect. For these reasons architecture at the UWE School is presented as a suite of undergraduate specialisms that share a core of rigorous Studio-based teaching but also ask students to relate this core-skill in architectural design to an inter-disciplinary specialism in planning, environmental engineering, building technology, surveying, spatial intervention or product design. It is important therefore to see the courses complying with accreditation criteria for the architectural profession – BA Hons. Architecture & Planning, B.Eng Hons. Architecture & Environmental Engineering and BSc Architecture – within this wider context. As part of a broader suite of programmes that explore the inter-disciplinary nature of architecture from a wide range of precise and particular viewpoints.*

*This expanded field of specialisms offers academics and students a rich texture of debate on the nature and identity of contemporary architectural practice. Post-graduate programmes extends this line of enquiry both by exploring specialisms at a higher level of scholarship and in a critical engagement with the identity of the*

*architect and the nature of architectural agency in contemporary society. To these ends the Masters of Architecture includes an engagement with Live Projects (continued across the school) and a suite of final year specialisms in critical urbanism, sustainable design, creative re-use and spatial intervention. Our Professional Practice and Management in Architecture continues to offer an inter-disciplinary approach to professional scholarship; the course is designed and structured to lay the foundation for 'life-long learning' in the architectural profession and its associated built environment co-professions.*

*The school continually works with its students to ensure they fully understand their professional choices in the context of the school's inter-disciplinary specialisms. Through a developing series of briefs throughout the years, the studio becomes the place where the ethos of the school is shared with, and valued by, the students. They are expected to bring together all the skills they have learned on their chosen courses to attain sophisticated specialist proposals that would not have been possible without embracing the school's holistic approach to design. This approach empowers students to become critically reflective and to develop an understanding of quality with regards their chosen specialisms. It allows them to question their existing values and beliefs in relation to architecture, and explore alternatives within the trans-disciplinary nature of architecture.*

*The school continues to ensure it remains critical of itself, enabling us to evolve and progress. We are committed to continue working to maintain and improve a rich and varied offer that responds to the needs of the profession.*

## 11

### **Commendations**

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The clear alignment of School and University ambitions for architecture to be a flagship for the institution.
- 11.2 The strong connection between the School and the city of Bristol.
- 11.3 The design of the programmes which enable an exceptionally convincing interdisciplinary ethos.
- 11.4 The high standard of purpose-designed physical facilities and associated resources and the programme of continuing reconfiguration and investment to meet new teaching and learning demands.
- 11.5 The dynamic and effective leadership which enables a vibrant and collaborative ethos amongst staff that contributes directly to the evidently high levels of student satisfaction.

## 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 should review the module structure of the MArch to raise the standards at level 1 in order to facilitate the School's aspiration for greater distinctiveness at Part 2.
- 13.2 The Board encourages greater emphasis on experimentation in the developmental process, leading to final resolution of projects at graduate level at Part 1 (BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning and BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering) and at MArch, Part 2.

**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 advises that the graduation projects at BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering display the iterative testing of both physical and environmental propositions in the development of the final design realisation.

14.2 The School is advised to review the impact of the use of the full range of marks on the mid-range marking.

14.3 The Board advises that the Part 3 course documentation (course handbook, mapping etc) be reviewed and expanded as necessary to ensure clarity to both students and professional examiners of the procedures and criteria for assessment of all modules.

14.4 The Board advises that the three assignments marked internally are made available to professional examiners with the submission for "Professional Experience in Architecture: Part 3" to ensure that the professional examiners can be confident that successful candidates meet all the criteria.

**15 Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted:

The clarity of the academic position and its delivery in the validated programmes is reflected in the commendations in section 11.

**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 Part 1**

The Board confirmed that all Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning and the BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering programmes.

**Graduate Attributes for Part 2**

The Board confirmed that all Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the MArch 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.

**18 Other information**

**18.1 Student numbers**

Part 1 BA (Hons) Architecture and Planning: 209

Part 1 B.Eng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering: 73

Part 2 MArch: 78

Part 3 PG Certificate: Professional Practice and Management in  
Architecture: 50

**18.2 Documentation provided**

The Department 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.

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Students
- University senior management
- External and professional examiners
- Staff