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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

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

Department of Architecture and the Built Environment

Date of visiting board: 23/24 June 2016

Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 21 September 2016

**1 Details of institution hosting course/s**  
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

**3 Course offered for validation**  
BSc (Hons) Architecture, 3 years (Part 1)

**4 Course leader, BSc (Hons) Architecture**  
Scott Hills

**5 Awarding body**  
University of the West of England

**6 The visiting board**  
Simon Gratton – Chair  
Hannah Vowles – Vice Chair  
Carlos Sanchez  
Julian Manev – student member  
Andy Crabb – regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, Validation Manager – in attendance.

Andrew Claiborne from Anglia Ruskin University attended as an observer.

One board member was unable to attend at short notice. The Board proceeded with the agreement of the Head of School.

**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 21 September 2016 the RIBA confirmed that the following course receive unconditional RIBA validation for Part 1.

BSc (Hons) Architecture, 3 years

The next full visiting board will take place at the same time as the next full visit to the other validated programmes at UWE. The date will be mutually agreed between the RIBA and the School.

**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, architectural technology, surveying, spatial intervention or product design. It is important therefore to see the courses complying with accreditation criteria for the architectural profession – BSc (Hons) Architecture (ARB / RIBA), BA (Hons) Architecture & Planning (ARB/RIBA Part 1 & RTP1 accredited), B.Eng (Hons) Architecture & Environmental Engineering (ARB /RIBA Part 1 & CIBSE accredited) and MArch (Hons) Architecture (ARB / RIBA Part 2 accredited) – within this wider*

*context. We understand these courses as an active 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 extend 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 MArch (Hons) 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.*

*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 collaborative and collegiate ethos is a defining thread of the character and distinctiveness binding the staff and students and manifesting itself in the studio.
- 11.2 The DDRU Pavilion project as an embodiment of the ethos of the School.
- 11.3 The University's commitment to maintaining and supporting the quality and standards of architecture education.

## **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 To maintain standards and quality, the Board expects the University to support the School in taking greater control over its intake entry requirements and process, and student progression through the course.
- 13.2 The Board recommends the further development of the Collaborative Practice module to enhance the collaborative and individual outputs in meeting GC6.1, GC6.2, GC11.1 and GC11.2.
- 13.3 The Board recommends the School recalibrate the 3-year BSc (Hons) Architecture programme by strengthening the collaborative first-year studio component.

**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 the School to consider the full integration of detail design (Advanced Technology) within Design Studio 3.
- 14.2 The Board supports the improvement of writing skills through the Making Place module and advises the re-evaluation of the dissertation as the culmination of the teaching of structured critical discourse across the BSc studies.

**15 Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted:

While not an action point or advice, the Board suggests that the School may now wish to take the opportunity to amend the academic position statement in the light of the visit, in order to express the distinctiveness of the 'offer' (including the BSc) of the range of courses. This could be advantageous for the School.

**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 BSc (Hons) Architecture 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**

BSc (Hons) Architecture, 2016 – 195 in total.

**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.**

**19.1 Budget holder and course leaders**

**19.2 Student meeting**

**19.3 Meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

**19.4 Meeting with external examiners**

**19.5 Staff meeting**