Report of the RIBA Exploratory Board to the Universidad Europea de Madrid
Escuela de Arquitectura, Ingeniería y Diseño

Date of visiting board: 24/25 May 2018
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 19 October 2018
Introduction

The Board wishes to thank the Universidad Europea de Madrid for its invitation to consider the Bachelor’s degree programme in Architecture and Master’s degree programme in Architecture for RIBA Part 1 and Part 2 candidate course status respectively. The Board is also grateful to the staff and students of the institution for their work in preparing for the Board’s visit.

1. Course offered for candidate course status
   Bachelor’s Degree in Fundamentals of Architecture
   Master’s Degree in Architecture

2. Name of awarding body
   Departamento de Arquitectura
   Escuela de Arquitectura, Ingeniería y Diseño
   Universidad Europea de Madrid
   C/ Tajo, s/n. Villaviciosa de Odón. 28670 Madrid

3. Vice-Dean of the School of Architecture
   Miguel Lasso de la Vega

4. Members of the Exploratory Board
   Martin Pearce (Chair)
   Angie Pascoe (Vice Chair)
   James Lai
   Paula Montoya Sáiz Ph.D Architect - regional representative
   Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA Validation Manager

5. Procedures and criteria for the visit
   The Exploratory Board was carried out under the RIBA procedures for validation and validation criteria, effective from September 2011. For more information see www.architecture.com.

6. Recommendation of the Exploratory Board
   On 19 October 2018 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed Candidate Course status as follows:

   Bachelor’s Degree in Fundamentals of Architecture – Candidate Course Status for Part 1
   Master’s Degree in Architecture – Candidate Course Status for Part 2

   ‘Candidate course for recognition’ implies that the course proposal is considered to have the potential to meet RIBA criteria, if implemented as anticipated. It is not equivalent to validation, which is only granted once the standards of work have been assessed and found satisfactory by a full board.

   The purpose of an exploratory visit is for the board to consider whether any new course requesting RIBA validation has the
academic, physical, and financial resources necessary to sustain and develop a course in architecture in the long term. No course will be visited unless there has been at least one cohort of students who have completed their studies, and can provide their full academic folios for a board to view.

A full visiting board to consider the programmes for full validation will take place at a date to be agreed between the University and the RIBA.

7. **Commendations**

The Visiting Board made the following commendations:

7.1 The institution has a highly skilled and committed body of staff who carry a strong reputation for excellence within the architectural profession and evidently are able to motivate and inspire their students.

7.2 The course has a clear structure and this is made evident through the 6 subject areas running throughout the programme of study at the Bachelor’s level, which were clearly and concisely communicated to board. These areas were less clear in respect of the structuring framework of the Master’s course. The institution had in response to the RIBA NCG recommendations better shown how the course content comprised the required 50% attribution to design across both courses, however this should be made explicit in respect of the full board.

7.3 The Institution has a strong commitment to robust quality assurance procedures and processes of critical self-reflection in developing the courses and enhancing the student experience to validate the institutional reputation.

7.4 In pursuit of continuous process of critical self-development the school tries to expose students to a diverse range of field trips, visiting lecturers, external critics and visits to other schools of architecture as a mechanism through which students can broaden their architectural horizons. This is of particular importance in the Masters course as the cohort, totalling 10 students in the current year, was small and this external perspective was critical in enabling them to benchmark their standards and aspirations.

7.5 The use of live project, working with real clients and with the potential to make a contribution to broader society was well demonstrated in projects such as that for a refugee centre in Kenya working with an NGO. The students clearly found projects such as this, along with more local projects working with communities and clients of significant benefit and inspiration. (GC6, GC7). The board felt that there was potential to develop such projects in the undergraduate school and to celebrate and publicise these activities of the University and use these vehicles for research outputs.

7.6 There are good workshop facilities with laser cutting and 3d printing resources along with robotic and materials testing resources. These prototyping, fabrication and testing facilities were evident in the course work in the portfolios. The 5th year project that required the reinterpretation of an organic system as a cybernetic representation
was inventive and gave the students good opportunity to develop their design skills in an innovative and challenging manner.

### 7.7

The teaching of urban design, theory and practice of the arts, and that of history and theory is a strength in the institution and introduces the students to contemporary architecture at the early stages of their studies.

### 8 Action points

The following action points are intended as constructive suggestions to the institution to help them to prepare for the full Visiting Board.

#### 8.1

The work as presented in the folios showed little or no evidence of draft sketches, preliminary drawings and developmental models which chronicled the iterative processes that had led to the final design results. The evidencing of this process work will be an important consideration for a future board and the institution should ensure that these materials are appropriately recorded and presented in the portfolios for a future board. (Section 4.7 of RIBA Validation Procedures, GA 1.1, GA 2.1 and GC 1.3).

#### 8.2

The academic position statement repeats much of the background to, and foundation of the institution but little of the unique character and distinctiveness of the architecture courses. These are better covered in Section 3. Proposed Special Features of the Course of the document submitted to RIBA NCG. As this will be an important part of future RIBA validation board reports the academic position statement should better reflect the unique and distinctive educational offer and should be rewritten for the next full RIBA visiting board.

#### 8.3

Acknowledging the specific requirements of the Spanish requirements for registration which specify the demonstration of a high level of technical competencies in respect of structures, costing and the statutory obligations of the architect (GC8, GC10, GC11); the board felt that these could be further integrated with the design projects at the Bachelor’s level, and the methodologies of developing integrated and holistic design projects evident at the Master’s level might be applied.

#### 8.4

With regard to the Bachelor’s course, this integration is of importance with respect to the environmental performance of building design, its development and testing through an iterative process by which the design project develops and is refined to meet the needs of human comfort and issues of sustainability and passive environmental performance. (GC9, GC 5.2) Similarly for matters of materials, construction and environmental control whilst the demonstration of understanding through generic projects, case studies or exemplars may show analytic competence it does not demonstrate the synthetic integration of such considerations into the student design process as it relates to their own design projects. (GC 8)

### 9 Advice

#### 9.1

The board noted an evident disparity in the amount of work between units of equal ECTS value. The institution should consider re-
evaluating the workload required against the stated 25 hours per ECTS credit using actual student experience as a metric in this assessment.

9.2 The board noted the strength of the students' work with regards digital fabrication and representation, however the use of handmade models, of various scales and hand drawings remain an important skill set for the architect in developing and communicating their ideas and proposals. The board felt that these means of representation should be enhanced to augment the students’ design processes. (GC1, GA1.2).

9.3 Many of the modules involved group activities and joint project based learning. Whilst the board supports collaborative and group based pedagogy the institution should ensure that there are robust mechanisms of assessment to ensure that all of the students are able to demonstrate at an individual level that they have met all of the criteria.

9.4 The integrated design project at Master’s level was a strength, however the institution needs to provide greater evidence that the full range of criteria were demonstrated in the single year of study through the project, as the criteria mapping at this level indicated. For example, whilst there was good coverage of the integration of technology, the ability to develop design briefs and understand the historical, and theoretical position that informed the design, aspects of management, practice and law and cost factors (GC6, GC10, GC11), were not systematically evidenced or tested across all of the students in the Masters course.

9.5 The final design thesis at 5th year level is described as a design project, Bachelor’s Design Graduation Project and whilst there is no doubt considerable critically analytic acumen demonstrated in the work (GA1.6, GA1.4, GC2.1) it more closely resembles a written dissertation or summary of the students developing design preoccupations and portfolio review at the final stage of their studies. This should be made clear to a full visiting board.

9.6 There should be a consistent method of providing feedback on assessment of work to the students. The use of clear marking criteria and written feedback could further enhance the student learning experience.

9.7 The university has good facilities and the recent introduction of open access studio spaces has enhanced the opportunities for informal peer group learning and the beginnings of the establishment of a greater studio culture, as counterpoint to classroom based scheduled activity.

10. **Academic Position Statement** (written by the School)
    The mission of the **School of Architecture, Engineering and Design** at Universidad Europea de Madrid is to train contemporary professionals highly equipped with the technical and intellectual ability to meet current society challenges and demands within the fields of Architecture, Engineering and Design. We prepare our students with the best available educational facilities and tools in our highly competitive society. This could be a common objective for any
higher education institution, but our School tries to go beyond this through four ambition missions:

- **Student-centered learning**: thanks to facilities and learning areas that make use of the latest technology, and best academic advising. From its beginnings, our School has been at the forefront in setting up innovative methodologies for developing skills and values, where the student is the focal point of learning from the beginning through their graduate specialization and research. The student support services (academic coordination, advisors, mentors and ombudsperson) guarantees the students guidance and personalized follow-up. The new Mentor Program was launched in 2016-17 with the objective to help the student in his / her academic journey to become an excellent professional. The Mentor Program focuses on responding to student demands based on experience, needs and maturity, both during the first academic year and later through professional mentorship. In addition, the School promotes student visibility through exhibitions and publications, either by means of blogs, books, or at the University webpage

(http://projectbasedschool.universidadeuropea.es/Learning+by+doin g).

- **Professional connections**: The School of Architecture, Engineering and Design wishes to anticipate and prepare students to access a range of possible professional profiles, from small, flexible and advanced offices to large companies and multi-disciplinary consultancies. The direct contact with the professional market allows our School to count with the most prestigious professionals amongst the faculty. Unlike other Spanish universities, our School curricula include mandatory Internships for students prior to finishing their studies. The contribution of professionals in our bachelor program is achieved thanks to the participation of panels of experts. The advice of the professional boards (COAM-Madrid Architects Association, and CSCAE-Spanish Chamber of Architects) are particularly relevant in the design of the curricular programs, in the same way as the School’s advice is relevant to the main Architecture professional Boards and Associations.

- **International perspective**: In order to offer an education that opens doors to the maximum number of professional possibilities, our focus leads us towards a definite international perspective. The continuous visits of architects and engineers from other countries to teach and lecture at our School and the exchange of students and professors, throughout the extensive network of Laureate international Universities are proof of this international focus. Last academic year our faculty taught at 32 different institutions. This is a real vocation with the possibility of receiving integrated training and learning in English in the whole Architecture program compliant with the European Higher Education Area. We currently have a
number of Exchange agreements with relevant universities worldwide:

**BILATERAL AGREEMENT**
Carleton, Otawa (Canada)
Newcastle (Australia)
NSAD San Diego (USA)
Arlington Texas (USA)
AUD Dubai (Arab Emirates)

**EUROPE/ERASMUS**
Bath UK
Coventry UK
Falmouth UK
Belfast University UK
Bartlett School of Architecture UK (under review)
Politécnico Milano (Italy)
Università degli Studi di Firenze (Italy)
IUAV Venice (Italy)
UDK Berlín (Germany)
Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)
Antwerpen (Belgium)
Paris la Villette (France)
Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture de Paris (France)
Budapest Műszaki Egyetem (Hungary)
Hochschule (Liechtenstein)
University of Kassel (Germany)
TU Delft (Holland)

· **Academic Quality**: The School of Architecture, Engineering and Design is lined up with the UEM quality policies, promoting a culture of quality and adaptation to student needs. The academic and managerial procedures, led by the Academic Management Board, are increasing both efficiency and transparency for both faculty and students. In addition, it is essential to constantly measure the results and perceptions through performance surveys and assessments, striving for continuous improvement. National certifications-accreditations (ANECA, ACAP-Fundación Madri+d) and International accreditations are also fundamental for guaranteeing the quality of the program. In March, 2015 UEM's Master's Degree in Architecture and Bachelor’s Degree in Fundamentals of Architecture were granted with USA NAAB Substantial Equivalency.

· **Curricular Integration**. Architectural education in Spain is historically framed in the Polytechnic University tradition, sharing design studio with a large volume of technological knowledge areas. Our School curriculum evidences that Architecture is not just a technical discipline but a powerful instrument that enables students to understand and improve the built environment. This solvency can only be achieved by means of a deep understanding of the intertwining of multiple phenomena (natural, historical, social and productive) and a strong awareness of the responsibility we assume.
for future generations. That is why we promote project-based learning by means of integrated workshops that allow students to negotiate with diverse knowledge areas within the same subject. The School therefore supports the blending of architecture with philosophy, music, engineering, economy or art.

· **Research & Teaching.** In the same way, the certainty of this expanded function of architecture has led us to prioritize research as being inescapably linked to teaching. There are three research groups of architecture in the University, PAR_PAN (Built Heritage and Antropic Landscape), RE-ARCH and AIR LAB. In them, professors of different areas work together with students’ support. The Master’s Degree in Architecture (according to 2011 curricular program) qualifies the graduate to practice according to the regulated profession of Architect in Spain. Apart from the aforementioned the program’s mission is described in the following headings:

  · To enable graduates to work in any of the five profiles of an architect’s work: construction, urban planning, real estate, drawing, and design.
  · To respond to the demands of society and the job market by introducing principles and knowledge related to environmental and social sustainability, accessibility and internationality, communicative skills (in Spanish and English), business management and efficient use of new technologies throughout the entire degree program, e.g. Building Information Modelling (BIM) implemented from 1st year on and up to specific postgraduate BIM expert courses. In addition to the curricular BIM activities and integration projects, extracurricular free BIM tools training courses are implemented, managed autonomously by the students association and supported by the UEM BIM Club.
  · To integrate all the different fields and areas through well-coordinated, integrated workshops and the Graduation Project. Core competences (CC), basic competences (BC), state competences (SC) and degree specific competences (DSC) are guaranteed during the studies. These are covering five learning areas: art and humanities, science and technology, projects and production, management and integration.

**11.1 Consideration of course content against the Part 1 Graduate Attributes and criteria**

The Board confirmed that the Bachelor’s Degree in Fundamentals of Architecture programme had the potential to meet the Part 1 Graduate Attributes and criteria. It identified no serious actual or potential omissions.

**11.2 Consideration of course content against the Part 2 Graduate Attributes and criteria**

The Board confirmed that the Master’s Degree in Architecture programme had the potential to meet the Part 2 Graduate Attributes and criteria. It identified no serious actual or potential omissions.
12 Other information

12.1 Documentation provided
In its action points and advice the Board has made several recommendations for revision of the documentation to provide greater clarity to the full validation board.

13. Meeting notes:
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 next full visiting board.

• Meeting with the Vice Rector
• Meeting with the rector
• Meeting with the programme team
• Meeting with students
• Meeting with staff