Report of the RIBA visiting board
University of Bath

Date of visiting board: 09/10 October 2014
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 10 June 2015
1 Details of institution hosting course/s
University of Bath
Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
University of Bath
Bath
BA2 7AY

2 Head of Architecture Group
Professor Alex Wright

3 Course/s offered for revalidation
Part 1  BSc (Hons) Architecture
Part 2  MArch
Part 3  Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice

4 Course leader/s
Matthew Wickens, BSc (Hons) Architecture, Part 1
Martin Gledhill, MArch Architecture, Part 2
Dyfed Griffiths, PG Cert in Professional Practice, Part 3

5 Awarding body
University of Bath

6 The visiting board
Andrew Wilson – Chair
Hannah Vowles – Vice Chair
Harbinder Birdi
Jonathan Bone
Isla Melville – student/graduate member
Chris Boyle – Co-professional member
Chris Mackenzie - regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA validation manager, was in attendance
Sophie Bailey (RIBA) attended as an observer.

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

8 Proposals of the visiting board
At its meeting on 10 June 2015 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed
unconditionally revalidation of:

Part 1  BSc (Hons) Architecture
Part 2  MArch
Part 3  Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice

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 University of Bath provides a unique offer within UK architectural education characterised by three distinctive components:

- integrated placements within the ‘thin-sandwich’ course structure
- collaborative teaching and learning within a joint Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
- a clear and distinctive signature pedagogy

Integrated placements

The Part 1 and Part 2 programmes at the University of Bath offer a unique structure of academic and placement learning. Each programme includes integrated placements of one semester’s duration. These occur in the 2nd and 3rd years of the Part 1 and the 1st year of the Part 2. This provides students with the opportunity to apply and develop their skills within professional practice as part of their academic programmes.

At Part 1 level the two periods of placement occur in semester 2, allowing students to extend their placement over the vacation period, should they wish to do so. As a result students entering their final undergraduate year may have accumulated more than a year of professional practical experience. In their 3rd and 4th year students are able to share through studio learning the skills and knowledge acquired in practice, to the benefit of the whole cohort.

In the Part 2 students are able to extend their existing work experience or commence a new placement period at the start of the programme. This follows an intensive induction and study week at the University, with the placement period running concurrently with their Practice Management and Law unit.

Each student in the UK is visited by academic staff as part of their placement and students working overseas are contacted through Skype if face-to-face visits prove impractical.

Collaborative teaching and learning

The University’s accredited programmes are taught within a joint Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering which was the first of its kind in the UK and in many respects remains unique. The courses were founded on the principle that professions that work together should be educated together in order to promote mutual understanding and the holistic design of the built environment. This collaborative ethos still guides the Department’s teaching and research activities.
The first semester of first year is jointly taught with students from the architecture and engineering programmes also working together on joint design projects in 3rd year and 4th year. Multi-disciplinary design projects are tutored by multi-disciplinary teaching teams with contributions by Architects, Environmental Engineers, Structural Engineers, Landscape Architects and specialist consultants.

The joint project in 4th year, The Basil Spence Project, has been running for more than 40 years and is widely seen as an exemplar in integrated, cross-disciplinary design education.

A clear and distinctive signature pedagogy
The education provided at Bath is rooted in the philosophical tradition of critical rationalism. The foundations laid by Professors Brawne and Happold in the 1970s and 1980s have continued to be built upon during the last thirty years and inform the Department’s signature pedagogy: Critical Method. This teaching method is communicated to all studio staff through annual induction. It is based upon the creative and effective use of criticism within clearly articulated models of the design process. It relies upon the effective assimilation of core aspects of knowledge within the early years of study and supports the increasing independence of each student, fostered through project-based, problem-led learning.

Programme design and delivery
The Part 1 and 2 programmes have clearly different aims which are based upon, and embody, the attributes specified within the RIBA criteria. The Part 1 programme provides a broad education in architecture, which is clearly structured, allowing transition from the school environment to that of being an independent learner within higher education. The Part 2 course allows students to develop and explore their own architectural agenda and acts as a springboard into professional life.

The Department maintains close relationships with a broad network of external stakeholders with numerous beneficial consequences for both our teaching and research activities. In 2013-14 140 different organisations and practices contributed to the delivery of our accredited programmes. This exposes students to a wide variety of skilled practitioners, often working at the cutting edge of their discipline. Through the breadth and quality of this input the students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills which are readily applicable to contemporary practice within a challenging and supportive academic environment.

All three accredited programmes are designed to embody, in a manner appropriate to the level of study, the educational aim of the Department. In summary this aim is to teach architecture as a learned, responsible and technically proficient discipline that requires its students to be culturally aware and focused in their use of creative imagination.


11 Commendations
The visiting board made the following commendations:

11.1 The Board commends the distinctive and confidently applied approach to teaching architecture which has created a highly cohesive and committed community of students, staff and visiting practitioners.

11.2 The Board commends the strength and effectiveness of leadership of the Department and of the three validated courses.
11.3 The Board commends the diversity and richness of the Department's interdisciplinary research environment and its contribution to the validated programmes.

11.4 The Board commends the thoroughness and balance of the curriculum and its production of informed, rounded and valued graduates at all levels.

11.5 The Board commends the attention to the poetics of materials, space and light at Part 1.

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 Evidence of process should be provided in the Part 1 portfolios in future visiting boards (in accordance with the Procedures for Validation 2011, section 4.7 (second revision 2 May 2014, page 34).

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 content, delivery and assessment of the cultural context strand in Part 1 should be further developed within the current structure (GC2).

14.2 The Board advises that the Department explores how to further enhance the vertical interaction between year groups and across courses at all stages.

14.3 The Board advises that consideration be given to the formal assessment of process work at Part 1.

14.4 The Department should continue the dialogue with students on the practicalities of securing accommodation during their placements.

15 **Delivery of academic position**
The following key points were noted:

Please see Section 11: Commendations.

It is a particularly strong and cohesive school which comes through strongly.
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 BSc (Hons) Architecture programme.

**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.

**GC2 Adequate knowledge of the histories and theories of architecture and the related arts, technologies and human sciences**  
**GC2** The graduate will have knowledge of:  
.1 the cultural, social and intellectual histories, theories and technologies that influence the design of buildings;  
.2 the influence of history and theory on the spatial, social, and technological aspects of architecture;  
.3 the application of appropriate theoretical concepts to studio design projects, demonstrating a reflective and critical approach.

Please see advice point 14.1.

18 **Other information**

18.1 **Student numbers**  
(As at 2014)

Part 1 362  
Part 2 60  
Part 3 30

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
• Pro-VC learning and teaching
• External examiners
• Staff