Report of the RIBA visiting board to the Universidad Piloto de Colombia

Programme of Architecture Part 1 and 2

Date of visiting board: 19/20 August 2014
Confirmed by RIBA Education Committee: 11 February 2015
1. **Details of institution hosting course/s**
   Universidad Piloto de Colombia
   Facultad de Arquitectura y Artes
   Carrera 9 No. 45A-44 primer piso
   Bogotá D.C.
   COLOMBIA

2. **Academic Dean, Programme of Architecture**
   Edgar Jose Camacho Camacho

3. **Course/s offered for revalidation**
   Programme of Architecture (Part 1 and 2)

4. **Course leader/s**
   Claudio Varini Part 1 Co-ordinator
   Rafael Francesconi Part 2 Co-ordinator

5. **Awarding body**
   Universidad Piloto de Colombia

6. **The visiting board**
   Professor Karim Hadjri - Chair
   Neil Lamb – Vice Chair
   Sally Stewart
   Femi Oresanya
   Camilo Ernesto Garavito García, Regional Representative

   Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk (RIBA Validation Manager) attended as secretary.

   The Board would like to express its thanks to Ms. Camila Florez and Mr. Javier Lopez who acted as interpreters during the visit.

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 11 February 2015 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional revalidation of:

   **Programme of Architecture (programme 116)**

   Part 1 is deemed to be met on successful completion of semester 6
   Part 2 is deemed to be met on successful completion of semester 10

   The next Visiting Board should take place in 2019.

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
10. **Academic position statement (written by the School)**

- The architecture program of Universidad Piloto de Colombia is based on the conviction that local architectural academies are entitled to try new and relevant forms of integration between nature, people and buildings in order to serve as an illustration of a highly globalized and critically urbanized society. Therefore, the students in the program employ the maximum range of architectural imagination and creativity, as is the view of the landscape in its large, medium and small scales.

- The foundation that the program establishes locally is consistent with the Latin American region and in particular with a country that, as in the case of Colombia, has a rich variety of settings, with a high number of cities at each level of population which are framed in natural regions of the widest biodiversity in the world, as well as cultural diversity.

- In a context like the one described above, the program turns itself into a center of architectural culture around which authorities, communities, local experts and national and international scholars revolve and intervene on a daily basis.

- The specific contribution on behalf of the Program, in this interaction with the external environment, is the ability to integrate aspects relating to habitat. This is due to the fact that the three so-called "substantive university functions" are present in every student and every professor: interest in knowledge (teaching), training to produce knowledge (research) and an attitude of service to apply this knowledge (community outreach).

- In regards to the students, the program considers that they should be allowed to achieve their professional aspirations while being aware of the global concern for the environment. To this end, the curriculum is organized on the basis of three curricular items: learning, study and knowledge. 1. The learning item covers parts 1 and 2 where, from the student's interest in being a professional in architectural design and construction is complemented with the consciousness of city and region for the harmonious integration of buildings within them. 2. The object of study is developed from the second half of Part 1 and includes all Part 2, where the future professional explores disciplinary architectural topics such as research and community outreach, led by the Program toward the reflection and self-reflection of the habitat and the inhabitant. 3. The item of knowledge is more distinctive of Part 2 and it is defined as "the projection of habitat", where students understand and practice the convergence of projects (personal, institutional, of the country, of the world) toward the landscape view. The object of knowledge is also the basis for bringing the student to the modalities of the concentration areas of study and research and of the emphasis on habitat, design, sustainability and landscape from the Master of Architecture that the Faculty of Architecture and Arts offers as its graduate program.

- The program confirms the architectural design studio as the core curricular subject, while updating it by inquiries made by the program itself about project and design. On the bases of the design studio, the students reconcile their individual imagination with Colombian and Latin American social vision. These contexts demand high creativity due to both, their difficulties as well as their potential. The fruit of the imagination and creativity, by the very tangible nature of architecture, are illustrative products for the contexts themselves and for the world.
The program advocates the contemporary understanding of landscape in which all scales are included, from interior design to the "skyline", all natural, human and artificial components, and all functional, aesthetic and meaningful reflections present in the scales and components. The notion of "landscape" is to be taken into account as it becomes evident that the spatial reality is constituted in such a way that each fragment of the landscape reveals distinct contextual relationships according to the extent of the environment to which reference is made.

Likewise, the program recognizes the requirement that the landscape, in both its conception and execution implies in terms of achieving synthesis and the importance of this in the integral processes and products. Consequently, the program checks on the synthetic content present in art and design in general, and in the relevant philosophical or theoretical thinking: contents that are translated into landscape terms.

To support the commitments that the program imposes on itself in regards to relationships such as those between local and global, academia and society, profession and discipline, research and community outreach, project and design, environment and contexts, and vision and synthesis, there are Architectural laboratories (Design, Technology, Planning, Expression, the Sustainable Environments, Satellite Laboratory and FabLab) as areas of expansion beyond the work in classrooms and workshops, where the student freely attends and stays, in search of academic counselling and experimentation in themes and activities, all within an overall figure of research creation.

The historical support and the identity of this academic position lies in half a century of anticipatory, pioneering, avant-garde and advanced actions, which are summarized by always studying the face of reality and integrally training people to take action. This originated in the very unique foundation of the university led by a group of architecture students in the intense and still pertinent juvenile age of the 1960s.

11. **Commendations**
The visiting board made the following commendations:

11.1 The specialist thematic laboratories and the library.
11.2 The continued development of the labs as a potential means to enhance the architecture programme and support developing research.
11.3 The Faculty’s dedicated engagement with the urban and social environment and outreach into the community.
11.4 The Faculty’s system for staff development that supports their professional advancement and ongoing 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. Failure by the University to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

13.1 The Board recommends that the design component in the academic portfolio be made explicit to demonstrate meeting the 50% assessed design work requirement.
13.2 The Board recommends that the professional studies component within the Part 1 be made explicit in the academic portfolio.
13.3 The Board recommends that academic portfolios at Part 1 and 2 provide evidence of a coherent progression and attainment including process work.

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13.4 The Board recommends strengthening the theoretical and philosophical content of the programme to help inform more diverse design outcomes.

13.5 The Board recommends that a culture of model-making be developed from a purely representational position to one providing opportunities for testing and experimentation within projects. FABLAB could be instrumental in this process and therefore the Board advocates that funding be available to support this initiative.

14. **Advice**

The visiting board offers the following advice to the Faculty on desirable, but not essential improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards.

14.1 The Board advises that more design exploration and outcomes at small scale be encouraged.

14.2 The Board advises that the balance between design work in semesters 7 and 8 is reviewed to better prepare students for semesters 9 and 10 and the development of their graduation project.

14.3 The Board advises the Faculty to consider how the grading structure can better identify excellent work. A better balance of formative and summative assessment could avoid compaction of grades.

14.4 The Board advises the Faculty to encourage student-led activities and more student representation in Faculty Council with the aim of enhancing and complementing the current programme.

14.5 The Board advises the Faculty to consider how existing facilities might operate if student numbers increase.

14.6 The Board advises the Faculty to fine-tune and make more explicit the aims and objectives of each year as a means to calibrate courses and projects, and increase students and staff understanding of the course structure.

14.7 The Board advises that, at Part 2, the Faculty develops a more innovative and diverse approach to the exploration of technology as a design driver.

14.8 The Board advises the Faculty to establish a balance between ad hoc and demand-led aspects of teaching and the strategic and targeted support agreed and defined between course and lab leaders.

14.9 The Board advises the Faculty to make Part 2 more informed by research developments in the Faculty to help create a mature series of graduation projects.

14.10 The Board commends the Faculty for its peer review process and encourages the Faculty to maintain and enhance this.

14.11 The Board advises that in future the Faculty provides separate mapping documents for Part 1 and Part 2.

14.12 The Board advises that the academic position statement should be strengthened to stress the exceptional aspects of the programme and the means by which the programme provides skills for modern professional practice.

15 **Delivery of academic position**

The following key points were noted:

- The ethos of the Faculty in terms of its engagement with the community and the focus on national and Latin American issues.
The programme structure incorporating representation, design, technology and urbanism, which form the basis for the specialist thematic laboratories.

The flexibility of the teaching delivery such as the introduction of the 10th hour of Studio and the 12-hour teaching day.

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 all Part 1 and Part 2 graduate attributes were met.

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.

The Board confirmed that all criteria were met.

18 Other information

18.1 Student numbers

2013: Semester 1 New Total
       185  1752
       Semester 2 178  1773

18.2 Documentation provided
The Faculty 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:

- Budget holder and course leaders
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with the head of institution
- Peer reviewers
- Meeting with staff