RIBA

Royal Institute of British Architects

Report of the RIBA visiting board to the University of Belgrade

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1   Details of institution hosting course/s
University of Belgrade
Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 73/II, office 238
11000 Belgrade
Serbia

2   Deans of Faculty
Dean Vladan Djokic,
Vice Dean (international affairs) Branko Pavic
Vice Dean (education) Djordje Stojanovic

3   Course/s offered for validation
- Bachelor of Architecture, 3 years full time, for Part 1 validation
- Master of Architecture, 2 years full time, for Part 2 validation

4   Heads of Department
Head of Architecture Vladimir Lojanica
Head of Architectural Technologies Miodrag Nestorovic
Head of Urbanism Rajko Korica

5   Awarding body
University of Belgrade

6   The visiting board
Professor Paul Jones, Chair
Andrew Wilson, Vice Chair
Professor Lilly Kudic
Sara Shafiei
Danilo Dangubic - Regional representative

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk, RIBA Validation Manager, was 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.

8   Proposals of the visiting board
At its meeting on 3 February 2016 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed unconditional validation of:

- Bachelor of Architecture, 3 years full time, Part 1
- Master of Architecture, 2 years full time, Part 2

Although mid-term visits are not normally carried out outside the UK, the Board believes that the School would benefit from a continued dialogue with the RIBA. The Board therefore proposes that an experienced member of the RIBA panel visit the School within the next 2-3 years to discuss progress in relation to the action points.
The next full visit should take place in 2020.

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 Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade)**

LEARNING BY DESIGN
The teaching and learning process at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture is structured around Design Studio culture. Design based curriculums, increasing yearly in complexity, comprise the majority of the Study Programme. Through practical experience and a project-based learning system linked with a wide variety of theoretical and research oriented modules, students are prepared for contemporary professional practice. The Study Programme is delivered by a pool of teachers with backgrounds in both practice (35) and research (34) to ensure the balance between theoretical and practical aspects of the education. Some of the leading positions at the Faculty of Architecture are held by teachers with a proven professional record of built projects in the region. Their experience and understanding of the building industry and legislation is an important aspect connecting the Study Programme with the modern professional practice. At the same time, the Faculty of Architecture actively participates in scientific research projects within the framework of the European Cooperation and the National Ministry for Science and Technology. These cooperations enable the Faculty to provide the continuous opportunity for new knowledge, offered through the Study Programme and introduced into professional practice by future graduates. With a one hundred and fifty year tradition, the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture has been the focal point of development, promotion and dissemination of architectural knowledge in the region.

BELGRADE – LOCAL AND GLOBAL OUTLOOK
Studying at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture means being deeply embedded in the fabric of the surrounding city. The city of Belgrade, in addition to being a vibrant and continually changing capital of the country, is an important node in Southeast Europe, and provides a rich contextual framework for teaching and learning at the Faculty of Architecture. The city offers itself as an opportunity to study contemporary change of the built environment, including cultural, social and economic conditions leading to this change.

The current methods of work at the Faculty, for both staff and students, include the use of small scale workshops found in the city, some even in the immediate vicinity of the school. The collaboration with artists and craftsmen, who traditionally thrive in the metropolitan culture of Belgrade, has always been an important part of studying at the Faculty and a specific way of developing a better understanding of the material aspects of the profession. Recently, similar links have been established with several providers of digitally based production technologies, leading to yet more experimental and innovative ways for the students and teachers at the Faculty to think, envision and design the built environment. Graduates are thus prepared equally well for the professional practice in the region and in other parts of the world. The education they receive at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade provides them with either an excellent foundation for further education abroad or the launching pad for a successful career the world over.

INTEGRATED EDUCATION
A distinctive feature of the Study Programme at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, is based on the integrated approach to education, with equal emphasis on Architecture, Urbanism and Architectural Technologies in three distinct Departments. The Study Programme is comprised of social sciences, humanities, technical, technological, artistic and philosophical aspects represented differently in each of the Departments with view to helping students develop sound professional knowledge, as well as the capacity to innovatively engage with current problems of our society.

The Department of Architecture is oriented toward developing an understanding of spatial organisation for contemporary life. It nurtures students' ability to create architectural projects of diverse scales and complexities in both urban and rural environments. Instruction at the Bachelor's level is based on the use of both digital and analogue media, with particular emphasis on the use of architectural models. Typical design briefs at this level aim to establish knowledge of basic architectural typologies through an understanding of the needs and aspirations of their users. The educational programme at the Master's level deepens a reflective and critical approach to architectural design. Typical design briefs at this level are strongly related to contemporary architectural theory and include environmental, social, cultural and economic aspects.

The Department of Urban Planning provides knowledge of the relationship between people and the built environment. Its aim is to provide better understanding of contemporary cites and settlements, and comprehend their plan and design within present day societies. A particular aspect of the education provided by the Department of Urban Planning is related to the problem of urban regeneration and sustainable development.

The Department of Architectural Technology provides knowledge of structural principles, design techniques, construction methods and building technologies. Its objective is to help students understand the design process, beginning with conceptualization and leading towards procurement and realization of architectural projects. At the Bachelor's

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level the learning process is oriented towards basic comprehension of structural principles and building materials, such as concrete, timber and steel. Students are taught about the specifics of different construction methods in reference to their design intent. The majority of the modules offered by the Department Architectural Technology are project based and geared towards production of detailed drawings with basic specifications, while the corresponding seminars introduce essentials of the cost control mechanisms, building regulations and construction management. Instruction at the Master's level is oriented towards understanding the growing influence of technology on the modern building industry. Students are encouraged to have a creative and experimental approach for a broader understanding of building material properties and construction methods. Typical design briefs at the Master's level are more complex and require a higher degree of integration between architectural, material and structural logic. Acquiring knowledge regarding the procurement of building projects is integrated into the process of architectural design. Strong emphasis is placed on energy efficiency and its early integration in the overall design strategy.

ELECTIVITY

The Study Programme at the Faculty of Architecture allows the student to come up with their own course selection, thus tailoring the education to their particular needs. All three departments offer a number of elective modules, open to all students. The number of electives increases and diversifies over the course of the Study Programme. At the Bachelor's level, the choice is very limited, while at the Master's level, students are given greater freedom through the unit system of the Design Studios and the opportunity to decide towards which of the three fields they will gravitate, directed by their choice of Department. Students at the Master's level are encouraged to attend electives from all Departments and explore specific areas according to their individual interests and aspirations. The list of topics offered through electives ranges from theoretical discourses, through applied and performing arts related themes, to those related to better understanding of the design media and building technologies.

FROM BASICS TO EXPERIMENTATION

The distinction between the aims and outcomes of the Bachelor's level and the Master's level is the degree of curriculum complexity. At the Bachelor's level, emphasis is on: understanding the complexity of architecture both as a phenomenon and as a discipline, tools and skills required to work in architecture given the aesthetic and technical criteria, the general knowledge of architectural typologies and basic understanding of building materials, construction methods, procurement routes, planning and building regulations. Typical design briefs at this level include the study of different housing models and other compatible uses in the built environment familiar to students. At the Master's level, the emphasis is on research mechanisms, development of critical thinking and creative application of knowledge acquired in the course of the previous study. Students are encouraged to conduct research according to personal interests and advance their knowledge of building materials, structural principles, construction

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methods and technologies. Typical design briefs at this level are more challenging and include programmatic and contextual complexities.

11   Commendations
The Visiting Board reiterates commendations 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5 made by the 2014 Exploratory Board. Additionally, the present Board makes the following commendations:

11.1   The exemplary and professional approach to the action points of the 2014 Exploratory Board made by the School.

11.2   The ambition and creativity of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, particularly in relation to model-making and representation.

12   Conditions
There are no conditions.

13.1   Action points: response to the 2014 Exploratory Board Report
The Board acknowledges and appreciates the progress made since the Exploratory Board of 2014. The following specific sections of individual action points remain as part of this report. (Paragraph numbers refer to the 2014 report).

6.1   Faculty structure and departmental roles; integrated architectural design
Although not a complete inhibition to student enquiry, there is evidence of tensions between the concerns of the three departments of Architecture, Architectural Technology, and Urban Planning. Despite the opportunities academic staff from all three departments have for framing briefs together, the administrative separation of the delivery of these curricular strands, each of which informs the development of architecture appropriate to a place, culture, and function, is an obstacle to students resolving design studio projects in a comprehensive and integrated manner.
- *the Faculty is strongly recommended to fundamentally review its structural/departmental organisation, with the aim of producing a single integrated curriculum aimed at graduating holistic designers*

The 2015 Board reinforces this point with specific reference to GA2.1 and GA2.3.

6.2   Architecture department
*With respect to **Graduate Attribute GA2.3: ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals,** the following is to be considered:*
- *the M9 project is to include a detailed review of technological precedents, including an improved representation through drawings and models of the project's materiality, its structural, constructional, and environmental agenda, and key strategies for resource efficient and sustainable design*

*With respect to **General Criterion GC6: understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, in particular in preparing briefs that take account of social factors,** the following is to be considered:*

- *the strong interest in architectural and urban morphology and typology throughout the programme was both noted and commended by the board, but it is strongly recommended that design briefs include more reference to, and proactive strategies for, communities and those living within them*

The 2015 Board found evidence that that this is now being addressed. However, this should be further embedded in the conceptualisation of the briefs.

6.9   ***Reducing administration and bureaucracy; reducing submissions***
The board is aware that there is good administrative support for the programme, but was concerned that the large number of assessment points was both burdensome to students, and militated against a properly reflective and self-critical attitude to the work they were completing. Each academic module thus needs to be carefully analysed and refined, with a view to better integration of the intellectual, practical, and professional strands of the architecture curriculum, and a larger aggregations of credits.

The 2015 Board reiterates this point.

13.2   Additional action points of the 2015 Visiting Board
13.2.1   The Board confirmed that the Masters programme meets the graduate attributes and satisfies the criteria; however, in many cases this is only at threshold level and by aggregation across the masters modules. The work in module M9 alone is not achieving the broad coverage of general criteria that the module descriptors issued to students or the criteria mapping documents indicate it should be demonstrating.

The Board strongly recommends that steps should be taken to address this.

This could be by merging M6 and M9 into a single, year-long design thesis project. This will allow students to have additional time to facilitate more criticality, reflection, complexity and coherence in their final design thesis. Moreover, this will enable the School and students at Masters level to fulfil their obvious potential and meet the high aspirations of an RIBA-validated School. The School is encouraged to agree with the RIBA a timescale in which this course change is implemented, preferably for introduction in the next academic year.

13.2.2   The student work at present favours output rather than process and development. Staff members need to reinforce the importance of demonstrating learning in the student portfolios through the inclusion of design development.

13.2.3   In relation to the curriculum, particularly at undergraduate level, the Board recommends that the number of assessment points be consolidated, particularly in relation to very small credit modules. This

is intended to reduce the number of assignments for students and create a clearer and more robust programme, to meet the general attributes and criteria in more depth.

13.2.4 The Board was encouraged by the quality and ambition of the undergraduate design projects. In relation to third year, the Board considers the scale of projects to be too large. In some instances, the present scale is inhibiting creativity as well as resolution. The Board therefore recommends that this be reviewed. Please refer to general criterion GC1.3.

13.2.5 The Board did not see enough evidence of context in undergraduate and postgraduate final year design projects, both in design development and final presentation. This results in low-level performance in GC5.3 and undermines the regional identity of the School. The School is encouraged to ensure that this requirement is embedded in learning outcomes from the start of the next academic year, and that students are made aware of this.

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 welcomes the new workshop initiative and advises that the facility is managed by the School to ensure it is an integrated part of the students' design process.

14.2 Whilst the Board is encouraged to see better integration of the three departments, the Board advises that the identity and distinctive qualities of each discipline be celebrated within the studio projects at Masters level.

15 Delivery of academic position

- The statement provides a clear explanation of the current structure and delivery of the school's architecture programme, contextualising this in both the geographical and intellectual sense
- However, the board believed that the statement could be more aspirational and give further detail about the future plans of the Faculty, including the development of the workshop-based elements of the course, and the internationalisation of the programme

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.

16.1 Graduate Attributes for part 1
The Board confirmed that all graduates of the Bachelor of Architecture met the Part 1 Graduate Attributes

16.2 Graduate Attributes for part 2
Master of Architecture, 2 years full time, for Part 2 validation

GA2.3 ability to evaluate materials, processes and techniques that apply to complex architectural designs and building construction, and to integrate these into practicable design proposals

Please see action point 13.1.

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.

GC1 Ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements
GC1 The graduate will have the ability to:
1.3 develop a conceptual and critical approach to architectural design that integrates and satisfies the aesthetic aspects of a building and the technical requirements of its construction and the needs of the user.

Please see Action Point 13.2.4.

GC5 Understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and the need to relate buildings and the spaces between them to human needs and scale
GC5 The graduate will have an understanding of:
5.3 the way in which buildings fit into their local context.

Please see Action Point 13.2.5.

GC6 Understanding of the profession of architecture and the role of the architect in society, in particular in preparing briefs that take account of social factors
GC6 The graduate will have an understanding of:
.1 the nature of professionalism and the duties and responsibilities of architects to clients, building users, constructors, co-professionals and the wider society;
.2 the role of the architect within the design team and construction industry, recognising the importance of current methods and trends in the construction of the built environment;
.3 the potential impact of building projects on existing and proposed communities.

Please see action point 13.1.

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18   Other information

18.1   Student numbers
Bachelor of Architecture - 900
Master of Architecture – 480

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.

- Dean and Vice-Dean Meeting with the head of Faculty
- Meetings with heads of department (architecture, urbanism, architectural technology)
- Student meeting
- Staff meeting