

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 29 May 2009

Revalidation Report – Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) / Diploma
in Architecture / Master of Architecture (by Conversion)

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Senate Office

The Glasgow School of Art

Revalidation Report: Wednesday 11 March 2009, The Bourdon Boardroom

Degrees of Bachelor of Architecture (Honours)
Diploma in Architecture
Master of Architecture (by Conversion)

Validation Panel

Dr Ken Neil, Head of Historical and Critical Studies (Convenor), GSA
Dr Glyn Davis, Academic Coordinator (Postgraduate Studies), GSA
Mr Ray McKenzie, Senior Lecturer, Historical and Critical Studies, GSA
Professor Neil Evans, Professor of Integrative Physiology, Member of the University of
Glasgow Academic Standards Committee
Dr Douglas Thomson, Senior Lecturer, Aerospace Engineering, Faculty Quality Assurance
and Enhancement Officer, GU
Mr Christopher Platt, Senior lecturer and Director of Graduation Studies in the Department of
Architecture, University of Strathclyde

Apologies

Mr Dick Cannon, Elder and Cannon Architects
Ms Lisa Buist, Student Reviewer

Programme Team

See attached

Attending

Ms Jacqui Fernie, Assistant Registrar (Quality)

1. Summary

The Validation Panel **agreed** to recommend to the Academic Council of the Glasgow School of Art, through its Undergraduate Committee that the above programmes be validated for a period of six years subject to one advisory recommendation, as outlined below.

2. Advisory Recommendations

- 2.1 The Validation Panel recognises the particular holistic approach to learning, teaching and assessment adopted by the Mackintosh School of Architecture but, in order to assist students in understanding how each project is assessed, asks that the Programme Team considers making this approach more explicit to students, in particular to those in Year 1, by way of information to be inserted into the Definitive Programme Document and the revised Student Handbook.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The Bachelor of Architecture programme leads to an Ordinary or Honours degree and to exemption from Part 1 of the Examination in Architecture of the ARB/ RIBA at the end of Year 3 full-time study or Year 4 part-time study. The full-time mode takes a minimum of three years for the Ordinary degree and four years for the Honours degree. Full-time students are required to undertake a year of practical training in an approved architect's office between Years 3 and 4. The decision on whether a student progresses to Year 4 Honours study is made at the end of the Year 3 and is based on attaining a certain standard in studio work and examinations.
- 3.2 The Diploma in Architecture programme at the Mackintosh School of Architecture is designed to provide the necessary educational framework for students who intend to enter the architectural profession, and confers exemption from Part II of the Examination in Architecture ARB/RIBA.

The programme offers an intensive training in the forces acting on building, and the specific skills of the architect. Project-based, it centres on contemporary issues of urban building, the work ranging from live projects and sponsored research to competitions and theoretical studies.

4. Private Meeting of the Validation Panel

- 4.1 The Validation Panel wished to explore the following areas:
- The implications and implementation of the Common Academic Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CAF)
 - Academic philosophy and rationale of the programmes
 - Estates and the impact on the student experience
 - Part-time student experience and how parity is ensured between full-time and part-time routes
 - Staffing and resources
 - The use of technology, for instance CAAD and the pedagogic use of the VLE

4. Meeting with the Head of School and Programme Leaders

- 4.1 The Validation Panel began by enquiring about the MSA's philosophy and ethos, especially in relation to the studio culture and using the City of Glasgow as a theme.
- 4.2 The Programme Team reported that the philosophy of the MSA was developed for the last revalidation cycle and describes how the MSA see itself and describes the relationship with Glasgow. This relationship has been further developed and strengthened through close ties with the University of Glasgow's Urban Studies Department and Glasgow City Council.

- 4.3 Asked if, by using Glasgow as a base, the MSA lost an international perspective; the Programme Team reported that, the Diploma programme has a more international focus. Both programmes offer students the opportunity to undertake live projects outwith Glasgow. The Diploma programme gives students an overview of cities with links to Porto and Barcelona and through a strong emphasis with sustainability and environmental issues. Glasgow is a good exemplar of a city with major urban issues and is used as a base to tackle big social, economic and environmental issues. Students also undertake projects in rural areas, which also have unique social and economic issues.
- 4.4 In response to a query on the advantages of being part of a Small, Specialist Institution, the Programme Team reported that a common visual language has been developing between MSA and GSA. The CAF will provide an opportunity to explore this further through collaborations. Cross-School crits between Fine Art, Design and Architecture students take place in Year Three.
- 4.5 The CAF would focus the programme and help students make the transition towards professional practice in the third year. The Programme Team explained that students are introduced to visual ideas in Years one and two, to professional studies in year three and research in year four. Last academic session, a cross-School project was run successful with all first year students. The opportunities for participation in the CAF, although welcomed, are limited by professional accreditation bodies.
- 4.6 The Panel wished to explore the deteriorating physical environment and the studio culture. The Programme Team responded that as part of the Estates Development Plan, the Bourdon Building would remain. A plan to enhance the environment is being developed with the Estates Department and would include consultation with students and staff. Effort is made to foster the life of the studios, through a series of planned events. Students learn to work together in studios and the life of the studios is vital.
- 4.7 Asked to describe the interaction and parity between the part-time and full-time modes, the Programme Team reported that part-time students have a different experience from full-time. Part-time students, who generally work in an architect's office while attending the MSA, usually work on project in their practice. Part-time students in the past have worked for local authorities, but this has changed to those in private practice. The MSA has undertaken research on the part-time option and changes are anticipated in the future. Distance learning options are also being explored utilising the VLE. At the moment, the VLE hosts all the lecture notes, but it will be expanded in the future to allow online crits and other pedagogical uses.

5. Meeting with the Staff Team

- 5.1 In response to a query about the future direction of the MSA, the Staff Team highlighted the possibilities of the urban lab and the connections with a bigger cultural framework; the opportunities for staff and students to be engaged win research projects and developing skills and connections through real projects.
- 5.2 Despite the economic downturn, the MSA is well placed to teach students about the external professional world. Students are prepared for practice through professional studies being taught throughout their time in the studio.
- 5.3 The Validation Panel was interested to explore the 'Interact' project. Staff reported that the project has been successful at responding to the changes in the timetable at Glasgow University. The MSA has a deep relationship with the University of

Glasgow. The Interact Project, with GU's Structural Engineering department and Glasgow Caledonian University Quantity Surveying Department. From Session 2009/2010, the project, renamed Interdisciplinary Design would be credit rated.

- 5.4 Asked about assessment and the mechanisms for reassessment, the Staff Team reported that in each term of stages one and two, discrete pieces of work are formatively assessed at a portfolio interview and work is summatively assessed at the end of year. If students fail, they are given the opportunity to resubmit over the summer. Formative assessment is carried out in stage three via a mid-year portfolio review for honours selection and summatively assessed for the Degree Show. There is a formative assessment mid point in stage four. Student cohorts are introduced to the holistic approach to assessment through careful explanation of generic intended learning outcomes.
- 5.5 In response to a query about how students' access information about assessment and the requirements of ARB criteria, the Staff Team reported that these are contained in project briefs which are available on the VLE. Assessment criteria and learning outcomes are specific for each project and are flexible to allow for minor changes in projects. Students have access to examples from previous years.
- 5.6 The Validation Panel noted comments from External Examiners about the place of CAAD (computer aided architectural design) in architectural design development.
- 5.7 The Staff Team debated that CAAD has its place and can be useful for some, and that there is a critical awareness surrounding the issues of the use of CAAD. Computers play a role in design, but architects must also be able to communicate their ideas to a wide range of audiences. Students need to have the skills base to do this and CAAD can be a useful tool to inform drawings and make design decisions and striking a balance is important.
- 5.8 The Validation Panel enquired about the Architectural History and Built Environment courses and how they relate to each other and to other aspects of the programme. The Staff Team explained that there are very distinct courses. The Built Environment Studies course covers areas relating to economic, social and political dimensions and how they interact with architecture. The Architectural History course considers the canon of architecture, providing a tradition and context for buildings. Through an essay, students analyse a building in its historical, social and cultural contexts.
- 5.9 The Validation Panel enquired about the pastoral care offered to students, especially those on the Professional Year Out (PYO). The Staff Team acknowledged that pastoral care for these students can be difficult. Students complete a log book which is assessed by the Professional Studies Tutor, is also available to counsel students if they need it and the Professional Studies Tutor also carefully monitors students' work placements. Stage Leaders are also key member of staff for pastoral care duties. Students are allocated a pastoral tutor who has office hours set aside for meetings. Pastoral care is also supported by the GSA Student Support and Development department, which also includes English Language assistance for international students.

6. Meeting with Students

- 6.1 The Validation Panel met with students from all years; both the full-time and part-time undergraduate students, Diploma students and recent graduates.

- 6.2 Asked why they chose to study architecture at the MSA, Students gave a variety of reasons including: wanting to study in Glasgow, wanting to study architecture at an Art School as opposed to a University and the school's reputation.
- 6.3 The Validation Panel wished to explore how CAAD was taught. The Students responded that the school has a firm grasp of CAAD. Students pick up computer techniques during their PYO and bring them back to the studio when they return in stage four. Students suggested that it would be more useful for them to learn project management skills.
- 6.4 In response to a query about their drawing skills, the Students reported that hand-drawing is taught in stage two and encouraged throughout the programme. Students highlighted the change of presentation medium from paper prints to PowerPoint presentations. Different tutors require different methods of presentation and questioned why there could not be consistency of practice. Students reported that presentation media is very prescriptive and hoped that tutors would allow students to choose the best form to present their work.
- 6.5 The Validation Panel enquired about the pastoral support available to students. Students reported that, in addition to their assigned pastoral tutor, if they felt they could approach their Head of Year or favourite tutor with any problems. Students welcomed their informal relationships with staff. During their PYO, students are in contact with the Professional Studies Tutor, who would vet their chosen practice. Students must also complete a log book which is also signed off by the Professor Studies Tutor. Students who have completed their PYO are invited to talk to students about to embark on theirs.
- 6.6 Asked how they are informed about assessment, Students reported that all project briefs contain intended learning outcomes and these are explained at the beginning of each project, where examples of previous outputs from the project are shown. While there is no printed handbook this session it is available on the VLE, although Students felt that the intended learning outcomes were very generic. Students who have to resubmit are given a guidance tutorial to prepare them. Often students feel that as the resubmission is capped at D3, they do not make the full effort. Students in Stage One reported that they had not been given any feedback or formative assessment as yet.
- 6.7 Asked about the how the courses interact with each other, particularly within the studio environment, one student reported that they had expressed an interest in Built Environment Studies but was disappointed that no one in the studio could support it. Students reported that in stages one and two especially, the studio course and the other courses feel separate and not integrated. The Diploma programme was considered more integrated.
- 6.8 In response to a query about access to resources, the Students reported disappointment that they found accessing equipment, such as the digital scanner/printer in Textiles, difficult. They understood that this and other equipment had been purchased for the whole School, but based in particular departments. Students also expressed disappointment at the disparity across the school of printing costs and that they are unable to print over the wifi network. These issues are being addressed through the student-led Student Forum.
- 6.9 Students reported that they valued the input from part-time teaching staff, as they are often in practice and their knowledge is up-to-date. Asked if the programme prepares students for practice, Students reported that the programme gives them a good mix of

artistic and technical skills and a good range of experiences, although Students would welcome more emphasis on technical elements, especially in the first stage, as technology can affect design decisions.

7. Additional Meeting with the Head of School and Programme Leaders

- 7.1 The Validation Panel conveyed the Student concerns about accessing other departments' facilities, especially in relation to network printing and the expectation on students to have their own laptops. The Programme Team reported that the Finance and Resources department are currently carrying out an audit of School equipment and how students are inducted to use it. The MSA is currently investigating providing a print service for students and are also looking at allowing digital submissions for assessment. Approximately 100 computers have been set up in studios and each stage of the programme has a dedicated laptop.
- 7.2 Asked about the integration of Architectural History and Built Environmental Studies into the studio, the Programme Team reported that technical teaching is easily embedded into studio practice. A project on the Public Realm in Stage Three incorporates elements of the BES course. The Programme Team welcomed the autonomy of Architectural History, but noted that there is an implicit integration with studio. Architectural History gives students the vocabulary to talk critically about architecture.
- 7.3 The Validation Panel was keen to further explore assessment and noted that the assessment process was not clear to students or explicit in the Programme Handbook and noted, in particular, the comments made by Stage One students. The Programme Team reported that there is a great deal of opportunities for feedback to allow students to develop into self critical, reflective learners, through an iterative process of reviews. Students have portfolio reviews which consist of written feedback at the Stage One formative review, weekly non-graded tutorials and termly reviews.
- 7.4 Asked about staff opportunities for research, the Programme Team reported that staff work extremely hard and the school is working towards systematising the school's work, allowing more opportunities for staff research. Staff research is also facilitated through career review and activity planning. The Programme Team reported that 80% of MSA staff was cited in the GSA RAE submission. The BArch Programme Leader reported that completing the PgCert in Learning and Teaching had allowed him to reflect on his teaching and in turn, allowed him to become a more self reflective researcher. Research is disseminated through the informal MSA Research Forum, and the Programme Team acknowledged that more needed to be done to encourage staff to write up their research for publication.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The Panel was very supportive of the MSA's undergraduate programmes and commended the School on its strong studio culture.
- 8.2 The Panel also commended the School on the strong pastoral care given to students on their Professional Year Out.
- 8.3 The Validation Panel **agreed** to recommend to the Academic Council of the Glasgow School of Art, through its Undergraduate Committee that the above programmes be validated for a period of six years subject to one advisory recommendation, as outlined above.

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Approved by Convenor: 15.05.09

Programme Team members at Validation Event, 11 March 2009

Mr Alexander Page, DipArch Programme Leader
Mr Alan Hooper, BArch Programme Leader

Ms Julie Annan, Head of Architectural History and Theory
Dr Robert Proctor, Lecturer, Architectural History and Theory
Mr Johnny Rodger, Lecturer, Built Environment
Dr Tim Sharpe, Head of Architectural Technology
Ms Rosalie Menon, Lecturer, Architectural Science
Dr Masa Noguchi, Lecturer, Energy and Environmental Studies
Mr Gordon Gibb, Director of Professional Studies

Mr Jochen Bub, Stage One Leader
Mr Graeme Robertson, Studio Tutor Year 1
Mr Robert Mantho, Stage Two Leader
Mr Ken Macrae, Studio Tutor Stage 2/ Engineers
Mr Tilo Einert, Studio Tutor - Stage 2/ Structural Design
Mr Isabel Garriga, Studio Tutor
Ms Jo Crotch, Stage 3 Leader/ Stage 1 Structural Design
Mr Ian Alexander, Studio Tutor Year 3
Mr Tony Barber, Stage 4 Leader
Mr John Morgan, Studio Tutor - Stage 4
Mr Fred Smith, Stage 5 Leader/ Engineers
Mr Charlie Hussey, Studio Tutor - Year 5