

Report of the RIBA Full Visiting Board to the Universidad de Chile

Date of visiting board: 6-7 December 2021
RIBA Confirmation: 3 May 2022

1 Details of institution hosting course/s

Universidad de Chile
Escuela de Arquitectura
Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo
Portugal 84
Santiago 8331051
Chile

2 Director of Architecture Department

Gabriela Manzi

3 Course/s offered for validation

8 semesters Licenciatura - RIBA part 1
3 semesters Titulo de Arquitecto - RIBA part 2

4 Course leader/s

Gabriela Muñoz	Undergraduate Director
Juan Pablo Urrutia	Architecture Degree Head

5 Awarding body

Universidad de Chile

6 The Visiting Board

Professor Kate Cheyne – Chair
Professor Sally Stewart – Vice Chair
Musa Garba - Practitioner
Carolina Ihle - Regional representative
Jaysha Fernando - RIBA validation manager

The Board would like to express its special thanks to all the translators who participated in 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. The Board was run as a full visit with the power to revalidate for the full 5 years.

The procedures were adapted to allow the Board to function remotely.

All requirements for documentation and work samples were exactly as for a physical board but viewed remotely.

The timetable and all meetings took place as for a physical board but remotely.

8 Recommendation of the Visiting Board

On 3 May 2022 the RIBA confirmed that the following courses be unconditionally revalidated:

8 semesters Licenciatura - RIBA part 1
3 semesters Titulo de Arquitecto - RIBA part 2

The next full visit should take place in 2026.

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)

Since the creation of the first 'Course of Architecture' in Chile in 1849, under the direction of the French architect Claude François Brunet de Baines, the School of Architecture of the Universidad de Chile (UCh) has developed a close relationship with national development projects and public issues led by the State, with a strong social engagement and responsibility from students and staff. Across the country and over the years, this relationship has produced many relevant public buildings, housing complexes and policies, urban plans, regulations, and projects, plus a deep knowledge in local architecture through research and publications, which continues to be the distinctive feature of our School, along with its diversity. Our students come from across the country and from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. In the last decade, our faculty has also become more diverse, with lecturers from other disciplines and countries.

The ethos of the school can be summarised as follows: at Universidad de Chile, we help build Chile. From the small town-hall in the far north down to the rural school in Patagonia, you will find architects from Universidad de Chile designing and developing their country. Our alumni and our students are the ones who design and build Chile.

Throughout its history, architecture training at UCh has been influenced by four major concerns, which have also shaped research and outreach within the school: urban planning, structural and building technologies, heritage preservation and housing development. Since 2010, the school has worked to integrate traditional disciplinary strengths with an interdisciplinary, multiscale approach to spatial and territorial issues, in relation with the three other disciplines in the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism: design, geography and urbanism.

In accordance with our history and our institutional goals, we define ourselves as a school training architects who are socially responsible, competent and aim for excellence; who have a strong critical and ethical sense; who are interested in influencing and developing public policies, with a deep understanding of territorial and urban planning issues; technically proficient in terms of building technologies, willing to collaborate with other disciplines and with communities in their work; and most important, able to develop

comprehensive architectural proposals. This ethos, wide scope, and diversity of possibilities for professional development informs the competence-based 2016 plan, currently implemented in its entirety with a recently graduated first cohort.

The Architecture plan is organised in five ‘realms of competence’ that represent the scope and skills needed by future architects to successfully perform in the professional milieu: Diagnosing realms of action; Planning the environment and designing architectural space; Materialising the architectural proposal; Managing and coordinating operation of the built product; and Conducting research. These competences are gradually formed while always fostering a sustainable approach, considering the social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of the context, and valuing the local and global conditions of the architectural problem.

The competences set the framework for the design of studios and courses between first and eleventh semesters. According to Chilean education law, the program is organised in two stages: a disciplinary-focussed eight-semester cycle at the end of which students obtain the ‘Licenciatura’ - equivalent to Part I, which allows them to pursue graduate studies-, and a professional three-semester cycle at the end of which students obtain the professional degree (‘Arquitecto’), equivalent to Part II, that enables them to practice the profession in the country.

During Part I, the design studio sequence follows a path of growing complexity in terms of the design variables students should consider and delve into to produce an appropriate and sound design proposal. From observation and representation skills to design thinking, contextual issues, building and sustainability technologies and integration of all variables at the end of the cycle through conceptual development and software, with projects that address contingent issues related to housing, public buildings, and local development among others.

Compulsory courses in Part I are comprised within the first five semesters; between sixth and eighth semesters, students enter a phase where they can choose several elective courses to eventually obtain an ‘intermediate certification’ in one of seven areas: public policies and management; theory and criticism; history and heritage; technology; sustainability and habitat; landscape; and territory. During this phase, students can apply twice a year for an exchange term abroad and spend one semester abroad in one of the 47 counterpart universities the school currently has agreements with, across 16 countries in the Americas and Europe. During the last decade and thanks to these institutional arrangements and support in the form of travel aid, international exchange has become an integral part of the experience of studying architecture at University of Chile.

After completion of the Licenciatura, students enter the three-semester ‘professional cycle’ that leads to the degree exam, where they must spend the ninth semester in professional internship; then, during the tenth semester they develop the conceptual background and preliminary proposal for their diploma project, while also taking some courses from the Graduate School that afterwards can be recognised as credits for a master’s degree. Finally, during the eleventh semester students fully devote themselves to the design of their architectural proposal and prepare for the final exam.

Our students' degree projects showcase both the variety of issues that the school's plan addresses and the disciplinary and social commitment that we foster. From urban parks and urban regeneration projects to public and mixed-use buildings, plus new typologies such as shared or elderly-friendly housing; from waste treatment plants and heritage or landscape restoration subtle interventions to innovative educational and health facilities; from water artifacts in the Atacama Desert to small buildings housing sanitation infrastructures in remote communities in the Southern islands, the ethos of UCh appears throughout every cohort. The common feature is a shared purpose of designing plans, buildings, public spaces, temporary interventions, or heritage preservation initiatives that benefit communities that dwell in the diverse cities and territories that make Chile.

Design thinking is the essential feature of architectural training and as such, it remains key for the different forms of practicing as an architect. Our Architecture programme addresses this feature that allows for disciplinary diversity within the profession, by increasing the number and type of elective courses and by defining intermediate certifications that account for such diversity. At the same time, this process has created challenges for the School and the curriculum management, in terms of the articulation between subjects and studios, the definition of an adequate academic workload, and the effective transition from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, beginning in the tenth semester, without affecting the development of the diploma project.

Facing 2022 and the years to come, we envision a return to in-person activities involving learned lessons from the pandemic context and the emergency mode of remote teaching. During this period, we have been able to introduce refreshing changes in our formative practices, reinforcing the development of communication and digital visualisation abilities in our students and faculty, and cultivating necessary transversal competences to effectively get adapted to a present and future context of blended learning-based teaching model. We believe that it will be interesting and challenging to explore such model for future times, to encourage the development of flexible skills in our academic community and fostering greater autonomy among our students.

Our academic commitment for the near future is based on three main goals: to continue increasing the internationalisation of the programme; to foster transversal integration with other disciplines around contemporary issues; and to evolve towards an active, situated learning practice, in which our students will be protagonists of their own training within technologically well-equipped learning spaces and laboratories.

11 Conditions

There are no conditions.

12 Commendations

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 12.1 The Board commends the confidence in, and implementation of school strategic plan improving the facilities to create a living and social campus.

- 12.2 The Board commends the school commitment to creating an architectural education that has social responsibility and resilient communities at its heart.
- 12.3 The Board commends a curriculum that includes explicit focus on research methodology alongside a breadth of core competencies to allow a plurality of architectural outputs and thinking.

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 school must consider how mechanisms can be designed to allow the staff and student communities to work together in partnership to develop and enhance the school and its curriculum, to support the development of a thriving and diverse architecture culture
- 13.2 The school must consider how processes of internal moderation can be designed to ensure parity of marking and to better allow the sharing of good practice and pedagogic development. Consider how this will be operated and embedded across modules within each year and across parallel threads within courses.
- 13.3 The school must consider how greater visibility can be given to the technical aspects of projects particularly at the Part 1 & 2 thresholds, to allow students to demonstrate and celebrate the synthesis of all aspects of technology within the design studio.
- 13.4 The school must ensure that the portfolios better display their knowledge & awareness of sustainable design issues. This should include an analysis of the physical properties and characteristics of building materials, components and systems, and their environmental impact.

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 the school to ensure and protect a focus on community engagement and resilient communities within students' final projects to strengthen the ethos and graduation profile that distinguishes this school of architecture from others.
- 14.2 The Board advises to reinstate live construction projects and also promote further live learning and the involvement of students with outreach projects.
- 14.3 The Board advises the school to encourage the students to connect their final design project back to their earlier work to allow for a year long robust comprehensive research and design proposal in order to develop a personal position.

15 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 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.

17 Other information

17.1 Student numbers

At the time of the 2021 RIBA visiting board: 1351

17.2 Documentation provided

The school provided all advance documentation in accordance with the validation procedures.

18 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.

- **Meeting with budget holder and course leaders**
- **Meeting with students**
- **Meeting with the Head of Institution**
- **Meeting with external examiners**
- **Meeting with staff**