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**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to  
Beirut Arab University**

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- 1     **Details of institution hosting course/s** (report part A)  
 Beirut Arab University  
 Faculty of Architectural Engineering  
 P.O Box :115020 Riad El Solh  
 1107 2809 Beirut  
 Lebanon
  
  - 2     **Head of Architecture Group**  
 Prof. Dr. Ibtihal El-Bastawissi
  
  - 3     **Course/s offered for validation**  
 RIBA Part 1 met at the end of a 1-4 year programme (4th year of the Bachelor in Architectural Engineering)  
  
 RIBA Part 2 at the end of a 5&6 year programme (graduation level of Bachelor in Architectural Engineering plus 1 year postgraduate course leading to Master in Architecture)
  
  - 4     **Course leader(s) to be completed by school**  
 Level One Course Leader: Dr. Mohamed Sobhy  
 Level Two Course Leader: Dr. Hiba Mohsen  
 Level Three Course Leader: Dr. Maged Youssef  
 Level Four Course Leaders: Prof. Ayman Afify / Ms. Ana Serrano  
 Level Five Course Leader: Dr. Hisham El-Arnaouty  
 Level Six Course Leader: Dr. Marwan Halabi
  
  - 5     **Awarding body**  
 Beirut Arab University
  
  - 6     **The visiting board**  

Sally Stewart	academic/chair
Jenny Russell	academic/vice chair
Andy Usher	practitioner
Daniel Goodricke	academic
Sophie Bailey	RIBA validation manager
  
  - 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 27 June 2017 the RIBA Education Committee confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are validated/unconditionally revalidated:  
  
**RIBA Part 1 achieved at the end of a 1- 4 year programme (4th year of the Bachelor in Architectural Engineering)**  
  
**RIBA Part 2 achieved at the end of a 5 & 6 year programme (graduation level of Bachelor in Architectural Engineering plus 1 year postgraduate course leading to Master in Architecture)**

The next RIBA visiting board will take place in: 2022

**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**

The Faculty of Architectural Engineering, Beirut Arab University is one of the oldest schools of Architecture in Lebanon founded more than 55 years ago. Since its establishment, the faculty of architecture has played an essential role in the history of Lebanon. In the time of conflicts, it maintained its responsibilities to aspire promising generations of architects to build the future of their homeland. In fact, many of them had a vital role in reconstructing cities in the post-war era with their community serving projects.

Being the Only RIBA accredited program in the region, this privilege places our study programs in a prominent place nationally and regionally. The faculty strives for further expansion and strengthening of its international cooperation. International guest lecturers and speakers regularly visit, International conferences (e.g. RAE2016 (in partnership with RIBA), workshops (e.g. CoF 2017) and summer schools are held and students often take part as well in international summer schools (e.g. UK 2015 (Cardiff) & (Lincoln) , workshops (portugual 2016) and field trips (Turkey 2011, Italy 2014 ,Spain 2015 and UK 2017).

***Ethos***

The faculty of Architecture has a tradition rooted in a history of social and cultural responsibilities towards our local context. Cities of Lebanon served as a permanent laboratory for the design assignments of the faculty of architecture's students and teachers. The faculty holds close ties with the professional community in Lebanon, with public services, Governorates, Municipalities, authorities and developers. Recently, the faculty has conducted meetings with the municipality of Aley, the provincial capital of Mount Lebanon, in order to carry out a series of studies both at the urban and architectural design levels. Continuing with the previous procedures followed during the collaboration between the faculty and the municipality of Sidon in 2014, students and professors are engaged with the municipality of Aley in order to tackle a series problems related to the development of the city.

Successful workshops included Rezoning & Parcelization of Eastern Wastani in Saida and Redesigning Sidon's promenade.

Beside local and neighbouring nationalities students, the increasing number of Lebanese students from abroad families applying to the BAU is a phenomenon that needs to be studied. This belonging and homeland connection together with the ambitious and entrepreneurial nature of the Lebanese students had led us to be more defined in our mission. Our mission to deliver a professional architectural education necessary for the students' international mobility, seeking to educate diligent architects who practice their career in a responsive manner towards the society, culture and environment at the local, regional and international level.

## **Teaching and Learning**

The education provided at the Faculty of architecture is set on a belief that the studio is a vehicle for creative rational:

Under the current heavy flow of significantly unreliable information, Students are exposed to unsupported arguments and illusive decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty .Our aim is to provide students with tools/skills for self-directed, self-disciplined and self-monitored thinking, the skill to think analytically, to compare, contrast, evaluate, synthesize, and apply with less instruction or supervision. In short, to be Thinkers more than followers. Our students learn to rely on questioning, analysis and exploration through an iterative process to inform the outcomes. This type of engagement allows students to look for less obvious relationships, react to unexpected circumstances and rationalize creatively.

This teaching method is communicated to all staff through semi-annual induction. It relies upon the creative and effective use of criticism while supporting the increasing independence of each student, fostered through project-based, student-centred and problem-led learning.

## **The process**

Design studio practice is currently adopting an integrative rather than dichotomous approach that employs analogue and digital methods in the design process. We are now pioneering digital methods of both design generation and physical production especially after the extension of the already present Model Making Workshop. Our new Digital Fabrication Lab, is a facility that has the possibility of hosting pilot projects and experimental schemes on different research levels related to advanced architecture. Workshops that Dialogue between staff, students and technical teams, together created a dialogue that inform the acquisition of new equipment to develop opportunities and capacities for innovation.

## **Features of distinction**

Our curriculum is tailored and frequently updated to keep pace with practical, technological and pedagogical challenges, as well as the rapidly changing nature of the profession itself. The curriculum was designed firstly to conform to the requirements of the order of engineering and architects (OEA) as a regulatory body that accredits architecture programmes in Lebanon (BSc of Architectural

engineering). Secondly, to conform to the criteria and requirements of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (part1 & part2). This has influenced the development of the curriculum, focusing on the local and regional matters while balancing between science, technology, management and culture in design. Our graduates are expected to acquire the required competences that enable them to work efficiently in geographically dispersed collaborative environments.

Our Part 1 program (years 1-4) provides a clearly structured approach that allows a smooth transition from the dependency learning pattern of the pre-university to that of being independent learner capable of developing a concept into a complete set of drawings. Part 1 students are also able to integrate technical, aesthetic, cultural and theoretical knowledge to inform his design process & outcome.

Research and practice empowers a holistic design approach in our Part 2 education (years 5-6), incorporating architectural and execution design courses contributing to a deeper understanding of technical expertise within the design process.

#### **Our environment**

Beirut Arab University allocates high quality investments evolving spaces in six types, instrumental to the delivery of our academic ethos and organised to support our pedagogy:

**Design studios:** managed and organized by each level's coordinator for analogue drawing and conceptual/study-model making. The design studio is also the primary space for desk, peer and group crit.

**The Hall "Atrium Space":** used on a rotating basis for panel crit and juries.

**Model Workshops:** facilities that have the possibility of hosting pilot projects and experimental schemes on different research levels related to advanced architecture. The workshop is equipped with 3D printers, laser cutters, a CNC milling machine, and a robotic arm, in addition to a series of manual tools that complement the facility in the production of a wide range of study models to real scale prototypes

**Laboratories:** Computer, GIS and a recently established environmental lab with a range of instruments in the area of buildings' energy efficiency, thermal comfort, and indoor environmental quality

**Lecture:** a wide range of digitally equipped lecture rooms and theatres that support the delivery of knowledge and events.

**Library:** library resources, supported by specialist librarians, that enable access to a vast amount of recently published materials for students and staff.

#### **Interpretation of the validation criteria**

In our faculty's effort to develop its ethos of "Social responsibility within an international market", we envision the validation criteria as an important opportunity and indicator that assist in designing and developing our learning objectives and outcomes, mapping

performances to its pedagogical expectations through well- designed assessment, as well as developing our teaching and learning activities. As a whole, they benefit students' competences development, provide support for international benchmarking for our quality assurance and offer greater diversity of local and international opportunities for our graduates.

## **11 Commendations**

The visiting board made the following commendations:

- 11.1 The board commends the school on the publication of its first Architecture Yearbook.
- 11.2 The board commends the institution on its investment into the infrastructure of the Faculty of Architectural Engineering.
- 11.3 The board commends the endeavour of the studio pedagogic strategy in level one.

## **12 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.

- 12.1 The board strongly recommends that the school considers way of developing the Senior Project (ARCH 540) to demonstrate greater coherent spatial ambition, technological strategy, synthesis and resolution, and a clear progression from the design work carried out in the Part 1 and semester 1 of the Part 2.
- 12.2 The Faculty must develop a mechanism for mapping both the RIBA General Criteria ('GC') and Graduate Attributes ('GA'), allowing the evidencing of individual student attainment. The faculty are encouraged to involve students in the mapping process to provide an opportunity for student self-reflection (see action point 6.2 RIBA exploratory Board Report 2015).  
Whilst the school has undertaken a general mapping of the criteria and attributes, evidence of individual student attainment mapped against GC and GA is not yet present in the academic portfolios.
- 12.3 The school should clearly articulate the aims and objectives of each level to help support the development and communication of a progressive curriculum across the Part 1 and Part 2.
- 12.4 The school should consider how it might develop a strategy for engagement and collaboration with its counterpart programmes on the Tripoli campus at both staff and student levels.

## **13. 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.

- 13.1 The board supports the institution in its investment in digital fabrication and advanced modelling equipment, but suggests that a strategy is devised to support the use of these in the development of speculation and experimentation within the design process.
- 13.2 The board suggests the development of progressive level learning outcomes to better differentiate expectations and attainments at each academic level.
- 13.3 The board suggests the school carefully consider the pedagogic rationale for juries, in particular in relation to the wider discussion of work and engagement across the peer groups and levels, consideration of summative assessment strategies, and the roles and responsibilities of examiners.
- 13.4 The board suggests the school consider the potential for strategic collaborations and shared learning with other disciplines within the institution, in particular, engineering, art and design programmes.
- 13.5 The board advises that for all subsequent RIBA visits, an academic portfolio consists of all assessed work produced by a student for an academic year as detailed in section 4.7 of the RIBA Procedures for Validation.
- 13.6 The board advises that the school take the opportunity to explain the ambitions for the Part 1 and Part 2 and also highlight their academic strengths in the Academic Position Statement.
- 13.7 The board advises that the written Graduation Thesis (ARCH 534) be retitled to Graduation Dissertation.