

## Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Architectural Association School of Architecture, May 2013

### Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the Architectural Association School of Architecture (the School) has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the May 2012 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The School has 370 full-time students enrolled on its foundation and five-year undergraduate programmes and 213 full-time postgraduate students. In addition there are 51 students enrolled on part-time programmes. There have been no strategic changes to programmes, awarding organisations or organisational structures at the School since the 2012 review.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School has made commendable progress with the four elements of good practice identified in the 2012 review report. The highly effective engagement of the wider professional community in assessment processes continues to add value to the student learning experience. This focuses on the use of the jury system and review panels that embrace a participative culture, inclusive of students and practitioners, to provide timely formative feedback on assessment events.

4 The enhancement-led approach to ensuring improvements in learning opportunities continues through implementation of the School's masterplan. Further development of the Bedford Square and Hooke Park facilities has provided enhanced learning opportunities and interaction between all student groups. The collections archive continues to enhance learning and teaching and students confirmed the usefulness of this resource. The visiting programme impacts positively on international activity. The School monitors flow-through of students from this programme and its effectiveness in preparing students for full-time study.

5 High quality and innovative teaching and learning identified as good practice continues. Students made very complimentary statements about the level of academic support they receive as a result of the high level of interaction with staff and external practitioners.

6 The School continues to provide accessible, high quality and comprehensive information both in paper and electronic form. The publications attract a range of contributors and readers from the international architectural community. The School makes innovative and effective use of the internet-based microsites to share learning opportunities between the staff and students.

7 The School has made good progress with the actions from the three desirable recommendations. It has developed a more systematic approach to academic management which is less dependent on the Director role. Key to this are the developing relationships

between the Academic Board, the Undergraduate Group and Graduate Management Committee, supported by redrafted terms of reference and diarising of events. Importantly, elected student representatives attend all meeting forums. The new structure allows for an effective hierarchical approach to programme management, review and enhancement.

8 Following the 2012 review, the School has implemented a more integrated approach to the Academic Infrastructure. The Registrar and quality facilitator monitor emerging aspects of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and other publications, and disseminate the key expectations through the committee structure to all staff. Staff emphasised the need for conformity with the Quality Code with respect to its relationship with The Open University.

9 In September 2012 the School introduced a formal induction programme for new tutors. The programme is in its infancy and the School is reviewing its delivery, structure and effectiveness with a view to further enhancements in 2013-14.

#### **Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

10 The School is engaging very effectively with the Quality Code and other external reference points. It has undertaken a detailed mapping against *Chapter B11: Research degrees* for its Doctor of Philosophy programme. It has also taken deliberate steps to ensure that the Expectation and relevant Indicators in *Chapter B7: External examining* are well embedded in policy and practice. Staff are familiar with Part C: Information about higher education provision of the Quality Code. School policies and procedures are highly effective in managing the quality, trustworthiness and accessibility of public information.

11 The School is accountable to its awarding body partner, The Open University, and the two professional bodies, the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), that accredit the undergraduate programmes. Through these strong relationships the School maintains a good sense of externality in its educational endeavours. In addition, it has access to leading professionals who are involved in curriculum delivery and development, and who ensure that teaching and learning remain current and leading-edge.

#### **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

12 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

13 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Freda Richardson (Coordinator) and Dr Neil Lucas (Reviewer) on 30 May 2013.