



Royal Institute of British Architects

**Report of the RIBA Full visiting board
to Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile**

Date of visiting board: 24-26 November 2023
Confirmed by RIBA: 04 December 2023

- 1 **Details of institution hosting courses**
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Av Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins 328
Santiago
Región Metropolitana
Chile
- 2 **Courses offered for validation**
Part 1 and 2: Professional Qualification in Architecture (6 years)
Part 1: Years 1-4
Part 2: Professional Title and Masters
Master in Architecture
Master in Urban Design
Master in Landscape Architecture
Master in Sustainable Architecture and Energy
- 3 **Head of School**
Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urban Studies (FADEU) Dean:
Mario Ubilla

School of Architecture (ARQ UC) Director: Luis Eduardo Bresciani
- 4 **Awarding body**
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
- 5 **The visiting board**

Alex Wright	Chair / Academic
Alison Coutinho	Practitioner
Cindy Walters	Practitioner
Sophie Bailey	RIBA Head of Validation
- 6 **Procedures and Themes and Values for Architectural Education**
The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022); this document is available at www.architecture.com.
- 7 **Proposals of the visiting board**
On the 04 December 2023 the RIBA confirmed that the following courses and qualifications are unconditionally revalidated:

Part 1 and 2: Professional Qualification in Architecture (6 years)

Part 1: Years 1-4
Part 2: Professional Title and Masters
Master in Architecture
Master in Urban Design
Master in Landscape Architecture
Master in Sustainable Architecture and Energy

The next visit to Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile will take place in 2028.

8 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 of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

9 Academic position statement (written by the School)

Training for Committed Leadership

The School of Architecture UC (ARQ UC) stands out for providing a comprehensive education in the field of architecture, which balances strong training in project design in all its scales and dimensions, with solid theoretical training in the fields of architectural history, technology, urban design, and landscape. The School aims to generate research and critical action capabilities, socially committed to the main challenges of the built environment and contemporary society.

This training, which favours reflective competencies based on project design, has allowed our graduates to expand their activities in fields as diverse as public building, housing, urban design and planning, landscape architecture, heritage recovery, and sustainable architecture. This action-oriented approach has enabled our lecturers and graduates to assume leading positions in academia and in public and private practice, both nationally and internationally.

Our approach has made it possible to attract the best students in the country, with the highest scores in the National University Selection Test for the 2022-2023 intake. This leadership has also translated into the School of Architecture being ranked 36th in the "QS World University Ranking 2023 of Architecture Schools", ranking the school 21st globally in "Employer Reputation" and 39th in "Academic Reputation". Likewise, national leadership has meant that the school has been consistently ranked 1st in Chile and Latin America.

This reputation is based on a highly qualified academic body: 46% of our full-time professors have doctorates and 36% have master's degrees from the best universities in the world. Professionally, our academics have been recognised both nationally and internationally for their work, winning various awards for their careers, works, and publications, or being appointed to positions of national importance in public and private entities.

As a whole, the research activities of the university have expanded in recent years, diversifying in all disciplinary fields. The School of Architecture is the largest unit within the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urban Studies (FADEU) and has developed a recognized core of the UC Interdisciplinary Research Centres, such as the Centre for Sustainable Urban Development;

the UC Wood Innovation Centre; the UC Cultural Heritage Centre; or the Concrete Innovation Centre, among others.

The dissemination of ideas, projects, and debates on architecture is also part of the essence of the school, its training, and intellectual leadership. To this end, the school has a publishing house "Ediciones ARQ", which publishes a wide range of material including the quarterly ARQ magazine. In particular, this magazine is one of the university publications indexed in the Thomson ISI: WOS Arts and Humanities Citation Index, among others, and has positioned itself as an important actor in the dialogue with culture and architecture at a global level.

Integrated and project-oriented training as a way of doing research

Since 2013, our study programme has reinforced the integration of theory, research, and design in it's with the Master's programmes as a way of promoting more innovative practices. We argue that much of the relevant and innovative research in architecture tends to emerge from design practices. From our perspective, relevant and innovative research in architecture — a key part of the UC Architecture School's approach — is fundamental to generating better projects and training students with the ability to ask and answer relevant questions based on reality. We believe this research is especially necessary in times of uncertainty and change, such as the present.

From this perspective, the teaching of architecture at UC also emphasises the development of critical thinking skills and a deep understanding of history and theory in all fields of the discipline. Our programme prioritises gradual learning in architecture workshops and representation in relation to courses in Theory, History and Criticism, Technology, Construction and Energies, City and Landscape.

Our curriculum is based on a model of academic training at university level, which takes advantage of all the opportunities of the discipline and professional practice that many teachers bring to the school, where 45% of the permanent staff manage their own outstanding professional practices. This condition provides for a diverse offer of architectural workshops and courses at the undergraduate stage, allowing our students to move towards a more interdisciplinary and in-depth study in project design in the existing Master's programmes: Master of Architecture; Landscape Architecture, Urban Project and Sustainable Architecture and Energy¹. The stage leading to the title of architect and the Master's degree, also allows some students to progress to the Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Studies, an interdisciplinary academic programme offered by the same Faculty to which we belong.

Common disciplinary training and training of expanded fields of architecture

Part 1: Licenciata in Architecture (8 semesters)

Part 1 includes the Workshops and Formative Courses. Except for the possibility of choosing workshops in semesters 6, 7 and 8, all courses in this stage are compulsory in the areas of Workshops, Theory-History-Criticism, Technology-Building, and City-Landscape. The aim of this common formative stage is to provide a broad range of knowledge and skills so that students

have a general understanding of architecture and its fields and can define their skills and interests. The Elective Workshops in semesters 7 and 8 are especially oriented to reinforce professional competences and open options for students to explore their different interests in architecture. This formative stage is especially complemented by elective courses from other disciplines (OFG) as part of the UC General Training Plan.

Part 2: Professional Degree in Architecture + Master (3 semesters)

Part 2 leads to the Master's Degree and the Professional Degree in Architecture. This stage of training is structured based on the student's choice of one of the four Master's programmes offered by the School in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Project (Urban Design), and Sustainable Architecture and Energy. Through a format of specialisation courses, research seminar courses and project-oriented research workshops, students acquire research and critical reflection skills in projects of various scales. At this stage, students obtain the Professional Degree along with the master's degree.

10 Commendations

- 10.1** The Board commends the exemplary academic rigour of the programmes, the distinctive curriculum structure that enables specialisms to be pursued at Master's level, and the pedagogical approach that embeds research by design as a means to prepare students for an uncertain future.
- 10.2** The Board commends the school on the quality and commitment of its staff, and in its combination of research staff with teaching staff, who have strong links to professional practice.
- 10.3** The Board commends the school for its response to the last Visiting Board and for the on-going reflective, critical self-assessment of its programmes, which was evident in all the meetings we attended.

11 Conditions

There are no conditions.

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. The university is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. 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 welcomes the elements within the programmes that aim to address issues related to sustainability. However, given the urgency of the climate and ecological crises which we face, and the important role of architectural, urban and landscape design in addressing these crises, we recommend that the school reviews the core mandatory content of its Part 1 and 2 programmes with respect to sustainability.

The Board welcomes the opportunity for students to specialise in Sustainable Architecture and Energy at Part 2, but we recommend that attention is paid to

ensuring the carbon literacy of all Part 1 and Part 2 graduates. We also recommend the review includes the acquisition of skills, knowledge and techniques that can be applied to design projects where the consideration of the full carbon life cycle informs the design process. We recommend that the role of architecture's response to the climate emergency is considered core to all pathways through the school, and that particular attention is given to the content delivered at Part 1 level.

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 welcomes the aspects of internationalisation that were explained to us. However, we suggest there may be benefit in the school finding ways to more fully present and celebrate the various forms of international engagement which take place in order that these are more visible and accessible.
- 13.2** The Board was impressed by the excellent workshop facilities which are available to the benefit of students at Part 1 and 2 levels. However, given the rapidly developing nature of equipment and software, especially associated with digital fabrication, we suggest this provision is regularly reviewed. This should ensure the school continues to offer the same standard of provision as a key component of the Part 1 and 2 programmes.
- 13.3** The Board welcomes the focus on the importance of studio culture within the school. However, we suggest that the provision of studio space is reviewed for all the cohorts within the context of the physical resources within the school. Making maximum beneficial use of all available space may provide some additional benefit to students. If possible, creation of additional space to support the studio-based pedagogy would be welcomed. The provision of suitable studio space can be an important component in ensuring a level playing field for those students who do not have access to independent study space.
- 13.4** The Board welcomes the school's approach to widening participation and social inclusion. We suggest it may be helpful to monitor the academic outcomes of students who enter through the various social inclusion routes. This may suggest areas where additional support would be of benefit during their academic pathway.
- 13.5** The Board suggests the school reviews how the requirements (including accessibility) of the full range of potential building users are manifest in the design and representation of projects at Parts 1 and 2.
- 14 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.

Graduate Attributes for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 1 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Part 1: Licenciante in Architecture (8 semesters).

Graduate Attributes for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Part 2 graduate attributes were met by graduates of the Part 2: Professional Degree in Architecture + Master (3 semesters). [Master in Architecture; Master in Urban Design; Master in Landscape Architecture; Master in Sustainable Architecture and Energy]

15 Review of work against Themes and Values

It should be noted that where the visiting board considered the Themes and Values to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a T&V were clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a T&V was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

Themes and Values for Part 1

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the Part 1: Licenciante in Architecture (8 semesters).

Themes and Values for Part 2

The Board confirmed that all of the Themes and Values were met by graduates of the Part 2: Professional Degree in Architecture + Master (3 semesters). [Master in Architecture; Master in Urban Design; Master in Landscape Architecture; Master in Sustainable Architecture and Energy]

16 Other information

16.1 Student numbers (from the School)

Part 1 Undergraduate	870
Part 2 Master	330

16.2 Documentation provided

The Department provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

17 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 next full visiting board.

17.1 Meeting with architecture budget holder and course leaders

The Board was pleased to meet with the School Head/Director, Subdirector of Academic Affairs, and the Heads of thematic areas: Design Studios; Technology and Construction; City and Landscape and History and Critic.

- RIBA validation is an opportunity for the school, and it supports the programme's trajectory regarding the process of evolving and changing. The eclectic design studios, minimal courses, optional disciplinary courses, elective interdisciplinary courses, and practical experience, provide the students with opportunities to solve new problems and respond to an ever-changing profession. The structures of the validated

programmes provide knowledge and skills to support research, defined specialisms and to connect architecture and academia.

- Structure of the two validated programmes:
Part 1: 400 credits (8 semesters)
Part 2: 150 credits (3 semesters)
- Through key curricula areas which include design and representation, history and theory, building technology and city and landscape, students are able to be comprehensive designers, whilst addressing social and political aspects and concerns.
- The links between the Part 1 and the specialist areas are complex but supportive, allowing a student to establish their profile.
- A combination of practitioners and researchers feed into teaching, and this is key for the final project, especially as this relies on a strong emphasis of mixing design and research.
- It is a great challenge to review and evaluate the curriculum, especially in-line with the matrix of the RIBA Themes and Values and Graduate Attributes. However, this challenge is viewed as an opportunity to connect with the programmes and help to consider how the curriculum can evolve to innovatively address issues of academia and industry, appropriately. The curriculum implementation has been very positive and has allowed students to evolve and for graduates to exceed nationally and internationally.
- There is a necessity to keep a balance between professional education and development so that graduates can be practice ready and able to move into industry with confidence, and the RIBA Themes and Values are supportive in this development.
- The main key challenges for the school and the programmes include:
 - Addressing the potential weakness in the connection between Parts 1 and 2 in terms of providing an insight and collaborative working. The measure taken to address this was to give increased variety in the final semester of the design studio, with more options and diversity to allow students to have an informed approach when selecting their specialism.
 - Revision of the contents of the courses, to refresh the knowledge and provide a stronger method of research as there is a weakness of the profession in terms of research. This was then strengthened through research methods, and group working.
 - The relationships between projects and research needed strengthening and was addressed. There is a more embedded approach to research and design. This also helps to connect different master's degrees, sharing issues, encouraging collaborative working and peer to peer learning.
- Challenges going forward include technology and ensuring the fluid and successful operation of a hybrid system and reestablishing a studio culture, post Covid.
- The challenges for the next five years include fabrication technologies, analytical tools, design technology, AI and augmented reality, and ensuring that the school's methodologies address them appropriately.
- Another challenge includes design skills and creative thinking; strengthening the connection between creative processes and research to enable this to continue and informing ways of design in architecture, addressing scales and issues.

- Students decide in the final cycle of the Part 1 which specialism they want to undertake in the Part 2. Students attend tutor presentations, and they have several weeks to make their choice.
- When asked what makes a Pontificia Universidad Católica graduate distinctive, the following was provided:
 - the rigour and strong architectural design of graduates
 - the strength in the architectural debate
 - the academic excellence
 - a strong cultural and theoretical drive
 - the social, historical, and political ability

17.2 Meeting with students

The Board was pleased to meet with students from all years of the RIBA validated programmes, including a recent graduate.

- The value of RIBA validation lies with the prestigious process that helps to challenge and encourage the university and school of architecture to meet benchmarks and strive for improvement. It is valuable to have these types of conversations about the programme and for peers to engage with one another, otherwise formal opportunities don't always necessary happen.
- On a national level, it is widely understood that Pontificia Universidad Católica it is an affluent and successful university. The architecture school in particular is regarded very highly and has a level of prestige not just nationally, but internationally. The school has an opportunity to thrive and succeed on a global scale.
- The school is spoken about very positively by graduates, especially in the way that the programmes available are a true experience of culture, support and knowledge. The approach from the university is appropriate for the discipline and students have the ability to realise how beautiful the career is.
- For many students, the diploma pathways were the main reason for choosing this university as it meant there were opportunities to specialise in a particular interest or area.
- The campus and facilities were also a factor in selecting Pontificia Universidad Católica. There could however be more studio space, but the campus itself and the workshops are excellent.
- Making and testing is encouraged to help emphasise the design process and understanding of a project. The professors are focused on supporting students on evolving their work.
- Studio space can sometimes be limited. Even though the university has very good sporting facilities, they are far from the campus where architecture is based. This makes it very difficult to engage in extracurricular activities. Therefore, a better sporting infrastructure would be appreciated.
- Students would like the space to engage with peers from other disciplines to create a more diverse university community.
- Chile is very socially diverse, and the university draws students from across the country. This could be very challenging for the university, especially to ensure that everyone is appropriately supported depending on their circumstances.
- There is a mental health clinic that is accessible to all students, but you are not assigned a specific personal tutor throughout your studies.

- Professors are limited on time, which is understandable and as a result, it can sometimes be difficult to receive academic feedback in a timely manner.
- Sustainability is quite considered; however, it could be further integrated and considered within the four-year undergraduate programme. Understandably, if you are opting for the Master in Sustainable Architecture and Energy, integration is explicit and incredibly rich.
- In terms of the world context and social concerns, the curriculum is in a good position to respond. Guests are invited from the municipality and external organisations to discuss many current issues; however, topics are not defined, and they do change from semester to semester.
- The issue of AI is openly discussed and how there can be future implications. Students appreciated being invited to many talks and events on this topic.

17.3 Meeting with senior management team

The Board was pleased to meet with the UC President representative (Provost) and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urban Studies.

- Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile is a very comprehensive university with a strategic plan which covers many areas. The institution is very focused on international engagement and digital transformation, in particular.
- The architecture school is a very important to the university and has a long tradition of being a leading school. It is well considered in the region as a successful school in the discipline, with strong demand in terms of applications and well-respected alumni both nationally and internationally.
- The strategic plan is very much intertwined and holds much value with the architectural curriculum. An evaluation of the curriculum is happening after ten years of implementation as it is necessary for the emerging architects to respond to the fluid profession, and to support national employability. New technologies, sustainability demands, and urban planning requirements are evolving and therefore, it is time to undertake necessary research to support this.
- There are challenges during this process and to ensure appropriate exposure for the students, it requires smaller, more niche tutoring courses and workshops. As a result, it has been expensive. However, it is necessary for teaching and training, and is a valued procedure to achieve a full, enriched curriculum and produce strong graduates for industry.
- Student wellbeing is taken seriously across the institution, whether that is through sporting activities, welfare provision, or mental health support. There is a comprehensive system for students to access support across the campus and fair treatment and good relationships are taken seriously.
- There are no resourcing changes to be made for the architecture school in the coming years. There have been some recent developments on the campus, but in terms of budgeting, there are no plans to change/reduce the current resource made available.

17.4 Meeting with external examiners

The Board was pleased to meet with several external examiners and assessors associated with the RIBA validated programmes.

- Many of the externals in attendance were associate professors at local universities and institutions. For some, the main role as an examiner was to be involved during the intermediate examination stage, whereby students present their projects and progress. Recommendations are then provided to the students for continuation of their works.
- Externals were also present during the formal final presentations, whereby the students present their final project, and a final score and assessment is undertaken. This is then ratified/moderated by a committee.
- Externals felt very comfortable and appreciated in their role as examiners, especially at master's level. This positive experience ensures a good relationship with the school and a broad understanding of the proposed outcomes and expectations of students.
- For the final exams at master's level, the jury are able to discuss at length. Juries are given an hour per student, which includes a 20 minute presentation followed by discussion and deliberation surrounding the appropriate mark. Generally, there is a consensus amongst examiners. This is then formally communicated to the student, including written feedback and justification of the grade.
- As part of the evaluation as an external, a review of the whole student portfolio does not take place. The invitation is to participate at different stages of the programme(s), whether that is preliminary, intermediate, or the final exam.
- The programme is well understood, and a pre-briefing is provided before the visit. Examiners are given a framework and boundaries of what is due for review and how it is to be reviewed. It is rare that the structure of the programme(s) is commented on.
- When asked what the principles strengths and challenges of the school were, the external examiners commented on the following:
 - it is considered the best architecture school in Chile
 - it is a well organised school with solid management
 - the school has tremendous potential and the master's course is evolving, becoming stronger, and should be applauded
 - cultural capital is a strength and the students/graduates are well read
 - there is a strong understanding of the complexities of architecture and society, and students are interdisciplinary minded
 - invitations to professors from other disciplines could help to feed into the programme, widening its collaboration and scope
 - written work could be strengthened
 - the university as a whole, could benefit from being more fluid, but due to structures and size, that might be difficult
- Sustainability and climate emergency is addressed at specific levels of the programme, especially through research. There is a wider understanding of earthquakes and climate issues relating specifically to the region and on a national level, but this could be strengthened in other areas and be more explicit within several areas of the undergraduate programme.

17.5 Meeting with staff

The Board was pleased to meet with members of the academic staffing team who teach on the RIBA validated programmes.

- Sustainability is addressed in a substantial way at master's level, however, at undergraduate level, it could be further established. Architecture is well placed to be part of the solution of the climate crisis and there is an opportunity to combat this in a more direct way.
- There is an understanding that it is easier to integrate sustainability at master's level, as opposed to the undergraduate. However, during second semester and the final year, there is a noticeable cross cutting of sustainability within the curriculum. Projects, spaces, and outputs are informed by climate and there is an acknowledgement of regional and national climate concerns in the students' work.
- Planning and urban design acknowledges the impact of climate design; however, it is less of a mandatory project and is more embedded within the courses.
- Engagement with the profession and the role of the internship is reinforced through practice mentoring. Students can gain experience and develop their understanding of the internship through an initial induction, intermediate check points and finally through the production of a report.
- The university maintains a practice network and students select a practice depending on various contributing factors, including the specialist interest of the student. Frequent check-ins happen with the students during the placement whereby protocols are established, which include pay, working hours and requirements. This is to ensure both the student and the practice are fulfilling the agreement.
- There is sufficient student support via student representatives, student counsellors and academic counsellors.
- Regarding the international offer, many visiting professors and critics contribute to the programmes helping to inform and influence the students.
- The majority of the student intake are Latin American, and an increasing number of students are working abroad post-graduation. There are also ample exchange and engagement opportunities with other schools of architecture, encouraging students to think internationally, be aware of local challenges and engage in peer-to-peer learning. Significant progress has been made regarding international engagement, however there are many more opportunities to discover.
- In terms of widening participation, there is a social inclusion admissions policy which aims to attract low-income students from marginalised areas to encourage access to the discipline architecture.
- Admissions via this route is done via a specific admissions test and interview. The state has started increasing the number of free admissions via this route and critical work in this area has been done in recent years. Social inclusion and widening access are priorities for the university and will remain high on the agenda of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.