

Discussion Groups Notes

1. Opinions on access to the register of architects and title of architect on graduation (integration of Part 3)

Group 1.

- Student from Kuwait studied for 5 years, now in 2nd year of experience. Qualified in Kuwait but not qualified here. At a huge disadvantage as it is not RIBA certified so what does she do for Masters?...very easy to go to university but after that time, and now in practice, it is not as straightforward as that due to commitments
- Conversation went to ARB and RIBA, and their differences. If two people were going for a tender job and one was ARB, but more experienced, and another was ARB and RIBA, but less experienced, a lot of the time they RIBA architect would be chosen as RIBA is known by clients (who are not architects). ARB should be advertised as much as RIBA as people think that RIBA means architect, not ARB.
- RIBA membership. Very costly, especially for small practices to pay for each architect. Can membership cost be reassessed? Reduced for architects and more for directors/partners? Offer a whole practice membership with reduced rate?
- Can 7 years be condensed into 5/6? Could we remove 1st year to reduce time to be qualified?

Group 2.

- Architect title is meaningless now... We are done with this whole hierarchy that is no longer clear. We prefer the term designer. For example, the title is no longer clear... For example "doctor" does not necessarily mean a doctor of medicine. The title "Interior Architect" does not have chartership under RIBA/ARB.
- Getting slippery now. Chartership and Title takes too long.
- Bartlett is open to the definition of architect and architecture. A lot of people don't end up doing that.
- Very individual...
- Architect title is important. Architect title tells clients you are "ready". There are certain range of skills and responsibilities attached to the name. Protection of title needed.
- Other comments:
 - Heatherwick Studios... Thomas Heatherwick is not an architect. Does he sign? He employs architects.
- Confusion of what the roles and responsibilities of an architect does now, same with landscape... Can architects do a landscape architect job and interior job? Is it an advantage or disadvantage with the title? -Multidisciplinary fields collaboration work, profession no longer clear.

Group 3.

- Two students coming from DIT in Ireland where the school is not RIBA accredited, they felt it was unfair that they could not gain access to register; they could do it while in practice but it is such a laborious and long cycle that it would probably be quicker to start again in a school that offered RIBA accreditation.
- What happens to previous experience, does it count for nothing, the feeling was that it does not, this may not be the case, but highlighted the lack of knowledge on the matter. Point was highlighted that someone knew a middle aged man who had worked his whole life in an office and during the recession wanted to gain his accreditation but had to go and start architecture, right from year 1.
- More recognition of life skills, awards that reflect this, access to register through life skills, also distain for the need for a final exam.
- In Holland, to gain part 3 it is only necessary to prove that a min of 2 years working in an office is sufficient. In an age where less and less building are actually constructed, part 3 criteria needs to be reassessed
- People felt that if you had done a certain amount of years in an architect's office you should gain access to master program (with portfolio of course) and on completion of master's degree gain relevant part 1 credits
- Mind set of Architectural Technologists is different on wanting to get accreditation, mainly not caring, interesting difference of opinion.
- Feeling was that the transition to work and to the part 3 is too forced
- RIBA needs to be more controlling of how practices accredit there workers
- A lot of people don't sign up for RIBA – too costly, pointless, waste of time, RIBA only really support students, when you have qualified what do they actually do, lack of knowledge of what they do (unless your maybe being sued) RIBA needs to do more if they are to justify the ridiculous fees
- Maybe a two tiered system will work better, so that when you gain part two you go on to a register as an architect (just rewards for years and years of work) and you also get support if needed (RIBA can control these too) and then part 3 is to become a chartered architect with all the usual extras that come too (signing off on buildings, being sued etc)
- No one had a clue about the mooted changes.

Group 4.

- We questioned the value of the title against professional experience as many people remain part one or two and have far more experience in architecture than a newly qualified architect
- However, immediate title gain would be better as we waited for so long and worked so hard only to have to sit another exam

Group 5.

- Part 3 more useful than part 2 vs. Part 2 as applied knowledge of year out.
- No part is “unnecessary”, instead there should be **better integration** between all parts
- The label “architect” should apply as soon as anyone can competently build a building.
- This needs to include social/political responsibility, an awareness of planning and building regulations and improve society.

2. When do students first engage or become aware of the role of the architect in practice? When do we want this to happen? (i.e. Professional Studies content)

Group 1.

- One student (Bristol?) said their uni has a communications module where they go through interview process with practices and then they have 1/2 weeks work experience whilst in 2nd year to give more insight for their work
- More universities need to integrate practices at earlier stages so students have a better understanding about how professional work is done, standards of work, layout of essential information etc.
- Earlier integration of professional studies was the general consensus for the group. This allows for more indepth knowledge from earlier stages
- 'Horror Stories' about practice. Schools need to remove the glamorised idea of architecture from students when they go into 1st year out. Students go to practice with the idea they will design skyscrapers, when all they do is toilet layouts, details, carpark layouts etc.
- Horror story idea went on for a while. With notes from myself about the fact that every, and all, architects, and associated fields, went through the crap jobs. Without them they would not be the great architects they are now.
- Conversation then developed into the different practices and the experience gained. Small practice = more responsibility, large practice = great chance of less overall experience. I assured them that whatever practice they go to the experience would be invaluable.
- I commented on the fact that I have always been at small practices as the overall knowledge I got from those practices can be applied to large practices. Buildings are built the same way, small or large, so I promote small offices as you do all jobs, but the work is merely scaled!
- Conversation developed into the types of architecture they want to do and how that could influence their choice in practices (don't work at big names because you think they are good, follow the architecture, not the name!)
- Overall consensus, school needs to get practices involved earlier and in more depth. Make summer placements compulsory for 1 or 2 months for experience?

Group 2.

- Depends what the role of an architect is... You can't define Architect anymore... down to individual/school when they want to expose the roles of an architect's 'job'.

We are not prepared... But the earlier you are aware, the better it is.

People are now looking for cad monkeys who know softwares, but also depends on the individual practice though. Perhaps we need exposure to all skills.

- Architecture school has an element of freedom. We are to train students to use skills and hand drawings – The ability to know how to present and communicate is most important. In fact the 5 years is to provide time to learn different areas of design of a building.
- Going back into politics is a good idea. Architects should be more into politics. E.g, Bristol's mayor was an architect.
- Other comments:
 - Why is ARB and RIBA separate ... Should combine! There was a LinkedIn discussion available on this, but was concluded as 'too complicated to merge'.

Group 3.

- The word architect – meaning craft was a problem to some, it's a very inward thinking word by definition, needs to be flipped as it misses the social aspect of architecture, it is limiting, peanut sized architect (quote) another way to phrase it could help expand the profession.
- Doing introduction to professional studies in undergrad is good (not all schools do this) but it was felt that going into too much detail in a student's formative years on creative design would not be beneficial. But a grounded understanding is good so when they go to practice that is where they can build on their knowledge – employers need to do more

Group 4.

- We need more clarity and education on what happens in practice earlier on
- Universities and tutors seem to benefit from not telling students about opportunities elsewhere so there needs to be an independent body which is responsible for exposing the offers elsewhere

Group 5.

- Depends on school – some schools introduce straight away (co-labs/client collaboration/regular placements etc.)
- Reality should be introduced early (perhaps from day 1), but in small doses at first.
- Not as important as personal development in 1st/2nd year
- **Need to know the box to think outside it**
- We need to be introduced to all the constrictions of reality, but encouraged to think creatively about them. **Restrictions encourage creativity, they do not limit it.**

3. Student and graduate expectations of practice during work placement: what works well? What was positive, what we want to be part of it?

Group 1.

- Discussion development from Question 2 answered this in a round about way, very short discussion about the question directly and what they would want to do.

Group 2.

- Architecture in school is too different from practice. Best stuff you build is in university because there is more flexibility, but you don't understand cost, management, no one designs specifications, no one designs building regulations. It's very different from practice.
- Some want to go into academia, research and theory. Do not totally agree of preparing students solely for practice. Disconnection also between A levels, foundation, undergrad. Bartlett students did foundation year, some found it was beneficial. Also a platform to decide whether to continue with architecture or not (this could be done within first year instead).
- Learning never stops. Up to individual with choice. Specialism, is not completely beneficial. Sooner in practice the better, even if its 1 week or 2 weeks experience, is relevant to further explore one's own interest and decision making.

Group 3.

- Professional structure needs to mimic the teaching process and vice versa – feeling was that what happened in practice was different to what happened in teaching
- Not enough preparation from the undergrad side of things, but there still needs to be that balance as the undergrad degree needs to develop the student's creative side too – once again the feeling was that the employer needs to do more, though many do offer great support to the students while they are there, but not always the case.

Group 4.

- Taking a job for less money is undermining the opportunities of every other graduate looking for a job and free work destroys the system
- By devaluing the skills of the profession, practice has become a commercially driven business
- Education can be extremely creative and theoretical and for part one branding should be taught to enable students to defend their designs and practical skills need to be taught ready for practice
- We can bring a lot to practice by being creative and thinking theoretically within the parameters of the brief to have an impact in an office
- Education needs to be much more collaborative across disciplines to prepare for collaboration in practice but needs to be done before postgraduate to ensure that there are no embedded stereotypes from practice
- Architecture the discipline is an insular one and needs to be better communicated to other people

Group 5.

- If we are not introduced to regulations and reality before work placement – we don't get chance to question. Practice often very conservative.
 - Needs to be more proactive critique of current modes of operating.
 - Better integration between practice and academia.
 - Need to end false separation between "theory" and "real"
4. Cost of architecture education? Cost of Part 3? Debt? Impact on choosing this course and profession? Is cost a hindrance and to what extend?

Group 1.

- £9000 is ridiculous money for uni fees. This NEEDS to be revised. Just because the government made terrible decisions doesn't mean the students need to pay the price!
- The cost of uni is scaring many students off, numbers were dwindling at some schools...slowly picking up as better understanding about repayments etc. is given to the students so £9000 isn't as bad as they first thought (although still very high)
- Part-time courses should be pushed as they allow for practical experience to be brought into play at uni level
- Many practices prefer part-time students as it allows for real inclusion in the projects whilst bringing in an 'up to date' view of architecture, as opposed to sometimes limited knowledge of real time changes in architecture world due to lack of current teaching
- If the students could go back would they change their mind about architecture, due to the £37000+ debt they will be in after undergrad (this includes the £3000+ maintenance each year)? A couple said maybe, but as discussion continued they realised they love the course and they want to be architects!
- Could the 1st year potentially be a 'taster' or a 'foundation' year? At a discounted price...this would allow the students to have a year as an architecture student and at the end of the year they will have individual reviews. Here they would be asked if they like it, if not would they like product design or landscape architecture instead? Other available courses at each uni could be promoted to the students so they will be happier for the remainder of their undergrad. Get onto the right track sooner rather than later!!
- Should the huge debt at the end of the degree be promoted as a 'Graduation Tax', if so would this have made any difference? We all thought this sounded better than seeing the huge numbers. It is more sugar coating the truth to ensure that students are not put off studying architecture before they even start

Group 2.

- Depends... Material is costly!!! Thousands of pounds spent on material... Some 3d print. We would like to see if there is a trend in finance in comparison to grades of students. Does better model making materials mean better portfolio/better marks from tutors? Does free use of CNC and laser cutting mean all marks become better? Some cannot afford this. Is this financial discrimination?

- Rich people pay for others (companies) to do work for them- seen as unfair. Some schools provide materials for free. Quality vs. quantity is confusing.
- Plagiarism for design is not yet established.
- Other comments:
 - Would like to see cost breakdown of where tuition fees go into a student's education.

Group 3.

- No one had a clue about cost, where you do it, how, etc, knowledge of part 3 was very poor. So people found it difficult to properly comment of this bar saying that better education on part 3 is needed (at earlier stage) and that schools should point out the hoops that students will need to go through at an earlier stage and a lot more clearly. Especially as the money students will pay over the course of their education, planning ahead is becoming a lot more important. Reality need to be clearer.
- Europe approaches cost differently, maybe their structures need to look at to see what, if anything can be learned from them.

Group 4.

- There should be some cross unity throughout schools and there should be more support from university tutors in terms of PEDR if we have to pay
- Perhaps part time is not an option as it could prevent you from being completely immersed in the field of architecture as a degree programme
- It seems irrational to pay nine thousand pounds and have a four month summer
- It also seems as if the tutors still operate in a world of three thousand pound fees whilst we pay more for the same service
- If you were paying for a service in a professional context you would have a guarantee but in an institution you have nothing to prove that you are not getting what you paid for
- A great deal of architectural education is self taught so what are we paying for?

Group 5.

- Need to know what's available. Why is it £9,000?
- Heightened awareness needed of alternate routes e.g. Part-time
- Where is our money going?
- ASN – apply for breakdown in spending.
- Young people are building debt not capital (part of greater problem of education business)
- Not sure if course is value for money.

5. What is attracting students to study in the UK? Why would you chose UK over other architecture schools abroad?

Group 1.

- ARB and RIBA came up again. Why should students have to study in UK, at much higher cost is outside EU, just to get RIBA certificated degrees?
- This led back to some previously discussed points in question 1
- Can RIBA concept be duplicated around the world to allow for students to practice outside the country they qualified in without having to do more studying in the UK?
- UK is the best in the world for Architecture qualifications, this is prove, therefore why should our certification be diluted because we are 'the best' (without that sounding pretentious)
- Some students who take semester out abroad come back and retake the year, as the teaching abroad is not up to the same standard. They feel left behind in terms of knowledge and experience.
- This was another 'plus point' for studying in the UK. The fact that it is so intense and hard to become qualified means that we have earned the right to practice all over the world.

Group 2.

- Comment 1: Architecture education did not suit individual interests. Scandinavia has a specific style of housing that they teach.
- Romanian student – education back home is very technology driven... Less creative and too functional. More flexibility wanted and is available in schools in UK.
- The subject of Architecture is more accepted by parents, the subject of Art itself can be a no from many parents. Parents understand heritage of education and establishment of UK education.
- Earning isn't much compared to education fees. Work visas are very complicated for international students, less likely to be employed. Some international students are being pushed away from UK Education. International students want to find postgraduate courses but too expensive. Some graduates are rejected due to the need of a work visa in which some practices are not willing to pay.
- UCAS now providing more information about overseas universities. RIBA should provide information on overseas RIBA accredited universities... RIBA Shanghai, Dubai, Hong Kong, etc.

Group 3.

- UK is very good at creating well rounded creative students, unlike parts of Europe where architecture can be very technical almost basically being technologists. In some countries architects are seen as engineers; don't want to go that route.
- We should not always give into the demands of the practices
- Practices are all so different and we need to keep providing a broad range of skilled students.
- RIBA Awards maybe don't help, could be scope for more varying awards. Promoting different skills and expertise
- Some were worried about the level of emphasis on graphic design
- Different schools should be able to give their own awards (which are on same standing as RIBA, vetted of course) at the moment technically everyone has the same degree though the difference in skill and knowledge can be vast – ie no diff between someone who is solely focused on sustainable design compared to someone is solely a graphic designer. Distinctions on

skills would be good, it was felt there has been movement in the right direction on this but not enough. Would help define things more

- RIBA mentoring needs to be expanded, and more publicised – only a couple of people had heard of it, but none fully knew who was able to get it, and where it was available
- For choosing schools, need to do more than just the poorly working league table. Definitions of schools need to improve, this is a brand issue, has improved over the last few years it was felt
- ie we are a school that teaches you do offices, or we just do sustainable stuff – would making the choice for students easier – everyone felt picking a school was hard, info is difficult to digest as unis are fighting of students so there needs to be a better way. It is not possible to visit every open day to actually see what is on offer. Maybe more tables ie sustainable design ranking, office design ranking, jobs got ranking, etc students have varying interests and ideas on what is architecture, this needs to be reflected in the way university course are portrayed
- Masters needs to improve on this too. Databases to compare masters courses against one another would be great, better descriptions too
 - **everyone was impressed about the survey done and that some change is being put forward – everyone wanted to see the fruition of this**

Group 4.

Group 5.

- International students – studying here in order to work here.
- British architects have a high reputation. Historic.
- Greater amount of unconventional, experimental and explorative teaching
- **We are encouraged to question conventions and push limits**
- Exposed to global knowledge – tutors/teachers from across world.
 - *Migration: flexibility of the course and being able to study part of it abroad?*
- Semester abroad – great. Needs to be more advertised.
- Possibility of shorter exchanges – 2 weeks/1 month.

6. Course content: what is relevant today? What we want the course to teach us?

Group 1.

- Relevant points being pushed at universities included sustainability, efficiency in design, programs to learn...
- Cultural context needs to be integrated more, potentially with the individual university as opposed to the studio chosen. With the studio, they should go to the place of the site (home or abroad) and understand the cultural context. Only so much you can learn from a book!
- History of architecture is not emphasised enough. All architecture is influenced by the past and this needs to be taught more. Without the successes/failures of the past we are not able to learn.
- Potentially add in an additional history module?
- What styles of architecture the students want to go into...I asked and the majority did not know.

- How can we show the students an overview of what they can go into? the majority want to go to Simpson/Foster/Hadid because it is the Starcitects that are being promoted in the media. Small, bespoke practices are not given enough credit. They need to see what is on offer before they choose their year out as the year out work can put them off Masters. This goes back to horror story point before.
- Better communication from practices to schools, and visa versa.
- Emphasise the student voice at schools! If they want to learn something new, as a module potentially, then promote student/faculty meetings better! Allow the students to learn what they want (within reason obviously. Core subjects are essential but additional lectures for the inquisitive would be brilliant)

Group 2.

- There is now no definition of an architect. There is an architectural history course, there should be architectural theory courses for students who want to go into teaching and academia. There should also be courses that specialize in research and innovation. ...to train them for Think-tank research departments for practices. (However a threat to smaller practices).

Group 3.

- What is important, getting people interested in architecture – undergrad is where this needs to happen.
- Collaborative effort needs to be improved but care needs to be taking on to the extent of this, too much collaborative work between disciplines may stifle creativity of the students'. Things need not be always realistic. General group working skills should continue to be taught but once again too much emphasis is bad as you end up doing the one thing all the time that you are good at and not gaining other skills (ie you always do the model while other members of group do the site analysis etc) It was felt that collaboration has improved but needs to be worked on
- Bring in urban planners – very isolated discipline yet so important to construction process.
- RIBA Directive on this required maybe
- Social element felt was missing from undergrad – helps to break barriers between discipline's. definition of Social being many different things
- It was felt that change would be difficult due to entrenched ideologies
- Employers need to stop bitching about quality of students and take more responsibility for further teaching once in the work place.
- We don't want to create student drones.
- Having to do a building as part of part 2 is wrong – needs to change – architecture is no longer just about buildings – what about framework designs, urban planning etc leads to students forcing through a building at the end when there project did not need it – felt this had to change, may not be the case but people were unsure to actual criteria set out by RIBA.
- Schools are forcing specialization, not broad enough – forced to tick RIBAs boxes – goes back to the need for different titles
- Year out flexibility needs to be improved and other options explored.

Group 4.

- Without practical experience we don't know what we need to be taught but education should not be always and only about practice
- It should be up to students to choose and find their specialisms and modules to ensure they choose their own path
- There needs to be continuity throughout the country about what the qualification requires and some common modules for everyone
- Undergraduate could be common across every year with specialisms chosen at masters level
- Sandwich and part time courses should run alongside full time courses in every university
- The year out should be renamed as it implies you only have one year as a finite deadline to develop your skills before coming back to education for masters

Group 5.

- Need more real life/exposure to world.
- Need teachers that have experience of what they are teaching – so we can faith in them (should have experience of real-life architecture/engineering etc.)
- Networks between people
- Need greater integration between courses and universities
- Architecture students engaging with civil engineer/planning/building regulations
- We are not the only ones involved in design.
- More systems involved in architecture – economics/value, policy, regulations.

7. Miscellaneous

Opinion 1: Architecture is going into marketing. Professional studies is beneficial, we have to adapt to the change of the future. We have to pitch and we have to sell. We need flexibility of choices in what we want to learn. Specialisms of schools can be beneficial now.

Opinion 2: Undergraduate should remain flexible as it is now. Postgraduate should be more down to individual choice and course types.

Opinion 3: Some practices are very helpful and open to giving work experience for a few weeks. Need better communication between practice and students during university.

Opinion 4: Schools need to be more clear/advertise what they specialize in for postgraduate courses, so that students are clear where to apply and what schools can develop their specific interests.

