CEBE Guide to Supporting Student Diversity in UK Schools of Architecture

Centre for Education in the Built Environment

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Compiled and written by

a CEBE project group on

'Supporting Student Diversity

in UK Schools of Architecture'

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1.0   Introduction to using this guide

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1.1   How to use this guide

What do we mean when we use the term 'diversity'

Within the context of this briefing guide for teachers of architecture, the term 'diversity' is used to embrace many kinds of difference: in gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, abilities and disabilities, and socio-economic background and culture.

By way of example (but in no way a definitive listing) this may include women students studying in what have traditionally been seen as 'male' subject areas, and in learning cultures developed to engage and support achievement amongst primarily male cohorts of students. It may include students with family and caring commitments; and students whose studies depend upon income from regular and substantial term time employment. Disabled students, including those with dyslexia, and work-based mature students from non-academic backgrounds, will also bring learning needs and creative abilities to their architectural studies and project work.

Recognising the range of learning needs and individuality of students is central to promoting a culture in architectural education that is sensitive to, and inclusive of, such differences, and where the pursuit of 'diverse excellences' can be valued and sustained.

Key reasons for supporting student diversity

'*adjusting methods of learning, teaching and assessment to meet the needs of a very wide range of students, in practice, benefits all students.*'

Successful Student Diversity', HEFCE (2002)

Reason number one: ITS NOW A LEGAL REQUIREMENT, and universities are expected to demonstrate both clear strategies and positive actions to support improved diversity amongst their student bodies. Aside from this, and from the equally cogent social justice arguments for parity and

equality of opportunity within course structures, supporting student diversity will:

1. Reduce drop out rates and improve student retention.

2. Enhance the experience and the confidence of both students and staff.

3. Support an enriched, more creative and relevant curriculum.

4. Improve student recruitment, through a well-supported message that architecture values diversity and welcomes applications from all those with the potential and commitment to succeed in architecture, irrespective of background or fee status.

5. Contribute to the survival and development of the profession - by producing architects who are more relevant to, and knowledgeable about, the increasingly diverse society and global communities they now serve.

How this guide can help you

'Supporting Student Diversity in UK Schools of Architecture' has been produced as a practical guide for teachers of architecture, and for Heads of Schools responsible for programme development. It includes relevant briefing for visiting critics, external examiners and those responsible for the professional recognition of architecture programmes. Its scope and treatment also make it applicable to cognate disciplines.

For those developing their own teaching practice, or new frameworks to enhance student learning, this guide sets out a rationale for good practice in supporting retention and achievement amongst diverse student populations. Within this framework, effective teaching and learning practices are identified in the main areas of architectural education where diverse student populations need to be acknowledged, engaged and facilitated.

Whilst the guide is usefully divided into distinct sections for usability, these are interrelated and mutually supportive, and it is recommended that the

guide is adopted in its entirety, as a holistic approach to responding to student diversity.

Some recommended practices, particularly those responding to Higher Education policies on widening student participation, and to equality and diversity legislation, are likely to already be in development within many schools, and their inclusion here is intended to support developing good practice.

Other recommendations draw on an emerging body of new teaching and learning initiatives in UK schools of architecture, developed by teachers and course leaders to facilitate the creativity, progression and achievement of diverse student cohorts. These are offered as good practice points that could be adopted by other schools. In many cases these will benefit all students.

The authors

The authors of this guide are teachers of architecture and members of a CEBE Special Interest Group, established to research and disseminate examples of good practice in supporting student diversity in UK schools of architecture.

Further resources

In addition to the resources and references listed at the end of this guide, further resources – 'issues' papers, good practice case studies, web links and diversity teaching and learning contacts – can be accessed on the 'Supporting Student Diversity' SIG pages of the CEBE website: www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk

2.0   Why supporting student diversity is central to architecture

As student numbers grow and architecture student profiles change, new approaches are needed to support the creativity, retention and progression of today's more diverse student populations.

A timely and workable alternative

The increasing diversity of the student body reflects the globalised society in which we live and the diversity of needs, multiple perspectives, and complexity of cultural practices that clients and communities will demand. This complexity must be recognised from within schools of architecture, and to be effective, must reflect a positive affirmation of the individual.

Engaging with the values that underpin the new equality and diversity legal frameworks in UK Higher Education will enable institutions to establish an understanding of these issues from which the development of proactive, holistic frameworks, that are embedded within the underlying systems and culture of a school of architecture, can flow.

Studio values: inclusion and exclusion in learning and assessment

Debates at recent CEBE/Concrete Centre 'Studio Culture' annual conferences, and at 'Re-designing the Studio: A Debate on Studio Culture' (organised in 2004 by the RIBA Equality Forum, 'Architects for Change' (AFC) and the student group ARCHAOS, to capture the experience and views of students in UK schools of architecture) suggest that some previously unquestioned values underpinning studio learning cultures, in particular, and architectural education in general, may be actively undermining the development of significant numbers of students.

At the same time, research by CABE, ('*Architecture and Race: the experience of minority ethnic students in architecture, 2004*) and the RIBA (*Why do Women Leave Architecture? 2003*), has indicated significant problems stemming from the fact that architectural education tends to engage with, and is shaped by, a largely white, male, middleclass Western European perspective.

A culture in crisis?

The picture of architecture that emerged from these studies, and from teachers and students, is one of a discipline where students are directed towards a narrow set of largely Eurocentric values, contributing to a mono-cultural architectural education isolated from the world outside of the discipline, and from other learning opportunities.

Within this framework, design agendas tend to be determined by staff, with students relying heavily on their tutors for direction, in what can amount to an apprenticeship or pupilage relationship within the studio.

Learning and assessment traditionally takes place in a studio culture that frequently privileges a particular learning style and a particular type of student over more diverse approaches and a more diverse cohort. For some this provides an inspirational setting in which they flourish, but for many the experience is profoundly negative.

Long hours, late nights in the studio and personal sacrifice to the project, do not combine well with the family, work and care commitments that are now part of the lives of many students. Similarly the competitive environment in which much studio teaching takes place, does not necessarily support the development of all students. Indeed, it may actively exclude some groups of students.

The research by CABE(2004) and the RIBA (2003) describes how those who are unable, or unwilling, to participate in or benefit from the traditional studio model and its associated teaching and learning patterns, can become marginalized, with female students, and those from international and 'non-traditional student backgrounds', being more likely to drop out of their courses than male students and their peers from 'traditional' student backgrounds, and less likely to achieve their potential. Worryingly, they also suggest that those who succeed can carry unsustainable studio practices into their professional lives, and so contribute to working practices that will further erode underrepresented groups in the profession. As a result, a profession that aspires to be more inclusive is deprived of members who might make a valuable contribution to the developing practice of architecture.

Female students make up 38% of intake to architecture courses is female / but only 15% of architects are women.

12% of UK architecture students come from minority ethnic backgrounds / but only 2% of registered architects come from minority backgrounds.

15% of architecture students are now international students – and this % is increasing.

White students from 'traditional student backgrounds' are 4 times more likely to achieve first class honours than their minority ethnic counterparts from 'non-traditional student backgrounds'.

International students and those from 'non-traditional student backgrounds' are more likely to experience serious difficulties in obtaining the range and level of professional experience needed to complete their qualification in architecture.

Supporting student diversity: an opportunity for disciplinary advancement

Through review and reconstruction of the values that drive traditional pedagogy, including subject matters that are commonly accepted as canonical, architectural education may not only develop methods to respond positively to student diversity, but may also produce graduates who are better equipped to respond to the needs of contemporary society.

3.0 Key strategies & actions in successfully supporting diversity

The following strategies and actions are crucial to successfully support learning, progression and achievement amongst diverse student bodies

Staff Roles and Development

- Recognise that integrating the values of diversity and equality of opportunity requires a whole school commitment.

- Enlist the knowledge and skills of all teaching and support staff to create a school culture that supports the achievement of diverse student populations.

- Ensure all staff have clear and specific information on their responsibilities within the new Higher Education equality and diversity legal frameworks.

- Recognise the demands these policies make on p/t tutors, guest critics and external examiners who are at the core of studio teaching and assessment, and support them with clear briefing and opportunities for professional development.

Student Learning Experience

- Recognise that students learn most effectively when their individual experience, interests and ambitions are welcomed and engaged in the learning process.

- Introduce more diverse role models amongst students' heroes and mentors, by recruiting more diverse staff, guest critics, external examiners and visiting lecturers.

- Tap into university learning development frameworks, and shape and develop them to support the learning needs of students on design based programmes.

- Develop additional student support frameworks, e.g. peer and mentor networks, at pressure points in the programme, including the early stages of the course.

Curriculum Design and Planning

- Put equality and social justice issues at the heart of discussions about the curriculum – both within schools of architecture and in the dialogue between academic institutions and professional, validating and industry bodies.

- Be prepared to review both teaching methods and their underpinning values.

- Devise approaches to tuition that embrace and engage the experience, values and ambitions of students from a range of cultural, social, economic backgrounds.

- Maintain individual contact, support development, and give early warning of problems contributing to under-achievement and drop out, through systems such as Student PDPs and the RIBA Professional Experience & Development Record.

- Develop stronger support and e-learning resources for part-time students, and for those learning during periods of professional experience.

- Think creatively about preparing students for periods of professional experience - and recognise that some students may need additional guidance and support during these stages of the programme.

- Ensure criteria for validating courses and prescribing qualifications in architecture support a curriculum and learning culture that engages and empowers students, and promotes vitality and relevance in their education and training.

- Recognise that embracing diversity can be both challenging and unpredictable and being prepared to work with these challenges.

4.0   Legislation

Higher education institutions are now required to be proactive in developing frameworks to support widening student participation and promote equality of opportunity within their institutions. This covers admissions, curriculum, assessment and student support.

Adopting the spirit and requirements of this legislation is not about political correctness, or lowering standards to achieve greater inclusion, but rather, it is about embracing new legislative and social frameworks to support a better recognition of the diversity and individuality of students and teachers.

Whether students are crossing continents or crossing cultures, there is much schools of architecture can do, and are now required to do, to ensure parity and fairness, and equality of opportunity, for their increasingly diverse student populations.

The value of, and the need for, such action is recognised by the higher education funding bodies, who have made substantial funding available to support widening student participation and retention

The following information summarises how equal opportunities legislation impacts on Higher Education, and the actions expected and encouraged to support implementation. (Correct in March 2006)

Gender Equality: The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises.

Victimisation because someone has tried to exercise their rights under the SDA or Equal Pay Act is prohibited. The SDA applies to women and men of any age, including children. The SDA applies to England, Wales and Scotland. The SDA prohibits direct and indirect sex discrimination. There are special provisions about discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and harassment in employment,

including the Sexual Orientation Employment and Training Regulations (2002).

Ethnic and Race Equality: The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended and the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 & Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Order 2002, establish general and, where appropriate, specific duties for public authorities and institutions.

Race equality policies and schemes: Higher education institutions are required to prepare a written statement of their policy for promoting equality, and of the frameworks they have put in place to assess its impact on students and staff of different racial groups, including the impact on attainment levels of such students.

Diversity monitoring and publication of data in the Higher Education sector: This involves collecting, storing and analyzing data about individuals' gender, ethnicity and disabilities, and linking this data and analysis with planning and implementing policies. Universities are now required to monitor, by reference to these factors, admissions and progress of students and recruitment and career progress of staff. They are also required to indicate in their policy statement their arrangements for publishing results of their monitoring, and to take steps to publish these results annually.

Entitlements of Disabled Students: The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was passed in 1995 to end the discrimination many disabled people face. For education providers, new duties came into effect in September 2002 under Part IV of the DDA, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). These require colleges and universities to ensure they do not discriminate against disabled people.

In September 2003, under Part IV of the DDA amended by the SENDA, the duty to provide auxiliary aids, through reasonable adjustment, came into force. From September 2005, further and higher education institutions have been required to make reasonable adjustments to physical features of premises where these put disabled people at a substantial disadvantage.

Positive action and positive measures: Positive Action is often confused with positive discrimination, which is illegal. 'Positive action' is legal and refers to actions and methods designed to counteract the effects of discrimination and to abolish stereotyping.

When under-representation of particular groups has been identified in the previous year, action can be taken to target and encourage people from these groups to take advantage of opportunities for work, education and training. Positive measures may include initiatives such as the introduction of fair and transparent selection procedures, diversity training programmes or policies. Such measures are important to the development of equality and diversity practices.

Positive Discrimination: Positive discrimination, which generally means recruiting someone because they come from a deprived group in spite of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications, is unlawful.

Direct discrimination: Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or because of their physical abilities. No justification is possible for this type of discrimination.

Indirect discrimination: This involves the application of a provision, criterion or practice that puts people of a particular gender, disability, race or ethnic or national origin, at a particular disadvantage, and which cannot be shown to be proportionate in achieving a legitimate aim. It covers both formal and informal practice, and customary ways in which an intention or policy is actually carried out. It includes attitudes and behaviour that could amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. To demonstrate it is discriminatory it will be sufficient to show the action or practice is likely to affect the group in question adversely.

Web links for further information:

Commission for Racial Equality	www.cre.gov.uk
Disability Rights Commission	www.drc-gb.org/thelaw
Equal Opportunities Commission	www.eoc.org.uk
Higher Education Funding Council	www.hefce.ac.uk

5.0   Recruitment and admissions

Issues

Potential students tend to be unfamiliar with architecture, which is not a core school curriculum subject. Where architecture is promoted, the information given often reinforces the 'public face' as largely white, male and middle-class. Careers guidance can also be influenced by negative stereotyping about gender, race, disability or social class.

Recruitment & admissions processes need to encourage and support diversity and social inclusion. In view of the variety of courses on offer and the length of the educational programme, potential students need more (and better targeted) information to help them make well-judged decisions between the courses on offer, and on architecture as a subject to study.

Good practice points

5.1 Outreach and information: raising awareness of architecture

- Highlight architecture as a subject and profession that welcomes ALL potential applicants and one that is working towards improved diversity.

- Raise aspirations of school pupils with the ability and potential for a career in architecture who might not otherwise have considered it by providing 'taster' sessions, pupil/student mentoring, and summer schools, to introduce the study of architecture and HE teaching and learning methods.

- Create and develop long-term relationships with relevant influential groups, such as schools, colleges, community organisations, parent groups, local authority careers advisors and other careers advice and training networks.

- Encourage reciprocal involvement between your institution and the local community, using initiatives such as Open House and Architecture Week.

5.2 Valuing diversity in the student recruitment process

- State your institution's Equal Opportunities policy and commitment.

- Finance is a particular issue in a long course like architecture. Provide details of Access Agreements to show how fair access is safeguarded and promoted, especially for low income groups.

- In your written and visual presentation material, use language and images that are inclusive and which will not appear discriminatory to potential applicant groups.

- Develop subject-specific information targeted at particular under-represented groups

5.3. Fair admissions and selection

- Ensure fair and transparent procedures are always used, so all applicants are treated equally, regardless of ethnic origin or fee status, and none are unjustifiably excluded.

- Recognition of the potential for a student to successfully complete the programme should be seen as the primary criteria for selection.

- Use a range of selection information, both quantitative (e.g. exam results) and qualitative (e.g. interviews and portfolio assessments), in the selection process.

- Where possible, use Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) that includes potential students' contextual factors and experience.

- Provide entry routes for applicants with unconventional qualifications and/or backgrounds/experience, including qualifications from other countries.

- Assess levels of English language skills (IELTS etc…) and support fluency in written work and discourse through pre-course learning programmes.

- Relate your strategies for fair admission and selection to school teaching and learning strategies.

- Regularly evaluate and update selection processes, monitor intake profiles, review and respond to recruitment gaps.

- Write a subject or department-based recruitment policy, making support of diverse applicants a key strategic objective.

- Admission assessors are key players in encouraging and supporting student diversity. Ensure they are not only well-trained and familiar with different kinds of qualification, but fully briefed on current policies and sensitive to the range of potential student cultural backgrounds and identities.

- Develop systems to ensure parity in the criteria used by different assessors.

6.0   Induction, retention and achievement

Issues

Students from non-traditional backgrounds including international students and UK black minority ethnic (BME) students face significant challenges in adjusting to the established culture and pedagogic frameworks of UK higher education. Re-thinking approaches to induction, programme organisation and student support can play an important role in improving integration, learning and achievement.

Good Practice Points

6.1. Following established good practice in student induction

- Arrange events that allow exchange between international and home students, and introduce them to members of staff - but recognise some interests may differ and that they may need different information.

- Give clear information and guidance about the modular structure of UK degree courses and how to construct a balanced programme of study.

- Ensure that course expectations are explicit, including what is expected of students in tutorials, crits, seminars, policies on plagiarism etc… These may differ from your expectations.

- Provide essential information on timetable, submission dates, costs during the year, vacations (when to book flights home) etc. before the programme begins.

- Use orientation programmes (which may run for a number of weeks before the student starts their course) to provide overseas students with essential information about their university town and living and studying in the UK.

- Provide pre-sessional and in-sessional programmes to familiarise overseas students with learning and study methods and to improve English language skills.

6.2. Year 1 welcome and induction process

- Extend the typical notion of 'induction week' to include the whole of the first term or semester. Recognise that this period can be extremely

stressful and isolating, with students feeling alienated in an unfamiliar learning environment and cultural setting.

- Use diagnostic exercises to identify skills gaps, and conditions such as dyslexia, that may require additional tuition or specific learning development support.

- Teach learning and study skills that are specific to architecture and higher education.

- Set up small-group or 'drop-in' workshop support, to provide assistance in an informal and non-threatening environment.

- Establish peer discussions, and inter-year group/studio peer and mentoring support.

- Provide clear communication about support networks, and personal tutor allocations.

- Monitor teaching and learning issues and empower students through a student-led staff-student discussion forum, with nominated student representatives.

6.3 Year 1: monitoring and supporting more vulnerable student groups

- Monitor retention rates for demographic or other patterns; take appropriate action where necessary.

- Provide extra 'bridging' support to ease the transition into university life.

- Develop part-time or flexible modular routes to address the needs of students who need to work, have disabilities (such as arthritis) which affect their ability to work continuously, or who are carers.

6.4. Providing positive support at exit or transfer points

- Recognise that, even with good support and student effort, some students will feel they have made the wrong choice in pursuing an architecture degree.

- Where this is the case, provide access to information and guidance that will help the student to make a rational and considered choice about their future studies.

- Establish appropriate mechanisms for people to leave/transfer to another course.

- Ensure that 'Exit Interviews' are conducted by a member of staff independent of the student's teaching and assessment, and that information from 'Exit Interviews' is monitored and acted upon.

6.5. Supporting students throughout their programme of studies

- Use mentoring, and other forms of development support, not only at the beginning of the course, but throughout the students study.

- Offer drop-in centres, and extra academic personal tutoring.

- Use student Personal Development Plans as both a learning tool and as a system to highlight, monitor and tackle potential problems.

- Raise awareness about student networks / associations as sources of peer support and advice, both those within your institution, and those outside (such as ARCHAOS Student Forum and RIBA Student Membership).

- Raise awareness of support available from other University services, the International Office, Language Support etc.

6.6. Year Out Experience

- Recognise international students and those from non-traditional student backgrounds may need more information and guidance on getting year out jobs in the UK or overseas.

6.7. Staff Issues

- Introduce training to ensure part-time tutors understand the learning and teaching needs of students from non-traditional backgrounds and the difficulties they may be facing.

- Provide more diverse role models through the development of a greater diversity of staff profiles.

7.0   Teaching & learning methods

Issues

Fundamental to any developments in programme organisation and structure is the need for a cultural change that repositions students from passive receivers to active creators of knowledge. There are strong arguments for pedagogic methods that empower students in determining the content and structure of their education, and encourage greater self-reliance and independent judgement.

Giving greater emphasis to student participation in determining design agendas, developing briefs and establishing criteria for assessment, will contribute to this. Group projects and peer learning will also extend the skills students need to be valued and rewarded in the complex multidisciplinary world of architectural practice, and amongst culturally diverse client and user groups.

Good practice points

7.1 Facilitating learning for students with diverse cultures and commitments

- Review and address language and communication issues.

- Clearly communicate programme values and programme frameworks.

- Review the course curriculum for diversity of content and take necessary action.

- Don't assume all students are familiar with European culture and design traditions - provide additional introductory material for international students and UK

- Students from non-traditional student backgrounds.

- Review reading lists for diversity of content.

7.2 Approaches Learning and Teaching

- Encourage student leadership and participation in programme organisation.

- Use flexible approaches that encourage students to draw on their own experiences and agendas in the studio and in their projects.

- Ensure clear and transparent communication of learning objectives and assessment criteria.

- Include projects that involve the diversity of skills and collaboration needed in contemporary practice.

- Introduce non-architects into the studio to provide more diverse perspectives.

- Encourage inclusive design agenda that recognise the diversity of users, in terms of ability, age, gender, sexuality, race or culture.

- Value the process and process-related skills as well as the product.

7.3 Recognising and managing pressures from extra curricular expectations:

- Establish and promote systems that discourage excessive working hours and excessively competitive working practices.

- Allow for flexibility and choice in the timetable to ensure school social events, evening lectures/events and study trips do not exclude certain groups.

7.4 Timetabling and resource issues:

- Minimise costs inherent in the course (e.g. materials, foreign trips, use of computers) and/or provide grants to support those who cannot afford them.

- Timetable well ahead and minimise last minute changes, so that students can plan ahead for care, employment rotas etc.

7.5 Alternatives to traditional programme structures and delivery:

- Cater for a diversity of study needs by developing multiple pathways, such as part-time courses, intensive evening/weekend courses, distance and work-based learning.

7.6. Guiding and developing staff skills:

- Question the relationships of power and dependency between student and tutors.

- Move towards a diverse representation in staff members.

- Develop, publicise and promote clear school policies on diversity issues.

- Support these by providing guidance and professional development for ALL staff.

8.0   The curriculum

Issues

Architects are working in increasingly multi-cultural situations within the UK and abroad, and dealing with people from a wide range of backgrounds, lifestyles and different physical requirements.

A broader, more inclusive curriculum, that provides a range of critical perspectives on world architecture, cross cultural influences, social histories and political and economic impacts on architecture, will enable students to develop the breadth of debate, and the critical understanding, their future professional role requires.

Teaching and learning architectural history, theory and culture is better assimilated when students can make connections with their own backgrounds and antecedents.

Inviting minority ethnic architects, female architects, and others from non-traditional architect backgrounds, to talk about their work, or to participate in students' learning experience, will broaden the perspectives of all students. For those who are themselves from non-traditional student backgrounds, their involvement will provide endorsement from role models close to their own backgrounds.

Schools of architecture and teachers need to be aware of the impact that staff values, priorities and unexamined stereotypical assumptions can have upon the cultural commentary they provide. This is particularly so where teaching staff and visiting lecturers are predominantly homogenous in terms of gender, ethnicity, social and cultural background.

Good Practice points

8.1. Recommended reading lists:

▪ Strengthen reading lists to reflect diverse theories and commentary, debate, opinion and record.

▪ Include feminist critiques, different cultural and lifestyle perspectives, and perspectives of people with disabilities, to encourage a wide

discourse on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disabilities, that will support students in developing a more sophisticated critical analysis, understanding and awareness.

8.2. History, theory and cultural context learning in the design studio:

- Avoid disjuncture between classroom-based teaching and learning and learning in the design studio, by more firmly linking historical, theoretical and cultural context teaching, to learning through design studio projects.

- Explore opportunities for teaching staff from both areas to establish connections that will enable students to draw upon the full range of their education.

8.3. Projects and assignments:

- Allow students to explore different contexts, cultural perspectives and experiences – as well as, and including, their own.

8.4. Profile of visiting speakers, lectures and reviewers:

- Review the pool of guest speakers and lecturers to provide students with a diversity of experience and a range of role models.

- Ensure positive models of difference are presented to endorse the fact that students come from, and will be working in, different cultural and contextual situations.

- Include as an integral part of cultural context and design teaching, speakers and lecturers with expertise and experience in inclusive design, designing with different cultural groups.

8.5. Attitudinal factors in teaching history, theory and culture:

- Critically review the school ethos and design studio values for ways to question or avoid or stereotypical assumptions and comment.

- Acknowledge and draw on individual student perspectives and experience in seminar and studio discussions in order to engage the full range of students,

- Inform studio and seminar discussions by encouraging wider and more positive critical thinking that draws on the different backgrounds and perspectives of students.

- Increase the knowledge base of staff through staff development programmes and by employing staff with more diverse knowledge, expertise and experience when making new appointments.

9.0   Assessment and feedback

Issues

Research indicates that women students can be disadvantaged where marking is not anonymous, and statistics associated with race and marks suggest that racial discrimination may also occur (see reference section).

The 'Crit'

The high challenge, low support environment characteristic of the 'crit' has been cited in decisions to drop out of architecture. Its typically confrontational approach can inhibit learning by promoting defensiveness and a reluctance to engage in constructive critical debate. Gender bias can also be an issue, with male bonding between students and tutors supporting perceived preferential treatment in design reviews, resulting in a more constructive critique of male student work. For international students, in particular, and all students more generally, lack of clarity in feedback can make it difficult to ascertain what is expected and how to improve performance.

Assessment

If the background and experience of part-time tutors, visiting critics and external examiners is limited, cultural factors included in assignment may not be acknowledged or valued in review and assessment. A narrow white, male, Western European viewpoint can result in bias which can undermine or negate attempts to include and embed wider aspects of diversity into academic and studio work. Assessment may also be influenced by stereotyping of students in relation their background, and can thus undermine integrating social and cultural diversity into the studio.

Tackling these problems is not simple: summative assessment often takes place at design reviews, where the author of the work presents it to the assessors, thereby under-mining anonymity. There are also inherent difficulties in implementing anonymous marking in the design studio due to the ongoing tutorial relationship between tutor and student, and the easily recognisable characteristics of students' representational styles.

It is important that teachers are critical and self-reflective when devising approaches to feedback and assessment, so that diverse excellences can be recognised and valued, rather than marginalized and ignored.

Recommended practice

9.1. Avoiding bias in summative assessment

- Consider removing the marking process from the design review and tutorial process, by introducing independent parties to assess submitted work.

- If anonymous marking is not feasible, awareness of the potential for bias is vital, and schools should actively seek to counter it. Actions may include auditing awarded marks in relation to gender, race, culture, disability and sexuality etc., in parallel to general monitoring of assessment to identify and remove anomalies.

- Ensure general good practice in assessment procedures is followed, including double-marking, and include individuals other than those who have tutored the student - and ideally individuals not present at the design review - in this process.

9.2. Avoiding bias in crits/reviews

- Tutors and critics need to be aware of the potential for 'favouritism' of some and a possible related marginalisation of others, and work to counter this.

- Counter potential discrimination, and increase the confidence of all students, by establishing a more diverse range of critics.

- Ensure that all work is viewed fairly and assessed against the agreed brief and criteria set. The criteria should be carefully considered to avoid inappropriate judgements based on bias, and to ensure that diversity principles are embedded in review and assessment processes.

- Recognise and assess students as individuals, rather than assuming that, for example, students from specific ethnic or religious backgrounds are one homogenous body. This applies equally to other groups of students.

9.3. Avoiding culturally alienating references in reviews + assessment

- Avoid unthinking culturally specific references that may become problematic in reviews where learning is dependent on understanding of, or identification with references outside the experience of some individuals.

9.4 Supporting learning and diversifying the review process

- Strengthen teaching and learning by diversifying approaches to design reviews (see CEBE's Briefing Guide on The Review Process: Sara and Parnell, 2004)

9.5 Providing clarity in feedback

- Ensure students understand the feedback they are given. Good practice might include offering an opportunity for them to clarify their understanding, by encouraging use of paraphrasing by the recipient of the feedback; by ensuring students take notes of feedback and discussion for each other; and by providing a printed record of feedback where appropriate. (see CEBE's briefing guide on giving feedback to students, 2006).

9.6 Recognising, engaging and empowering students in the review process

- Value students' diverse personal experiences as contributing to project learning.

- Promote exchange between peers as part of a supportive and challenging approach to feedback and assessment in the design of reviews.

- Provide support and input for the development of relevant skills, e.g. active listening, making presentations, giving constructive feedback, so students are well-prepared to take responsibility for engaging in discussion.

- Provide opportunities for peer review, within interim or final design review processes, or embed a requirement for peer review within a collaborative design project.

9.7 Promoting other voices

- Think about the potential range of voices that might be introduced, through the pool of visiting critics, or other staff, and invite non-architects to be part of review discussions.

9.8 Briefing critics

- It is all too easy for the positive actions of many to be undermined by a few. Ensure everyone involved in feedback and assessment processes is aware of the underlying ethos for reviews and marking in the school or department. Consider producing a summary statement, or briefing document to visiting critics, part-time tutors and external examiners, as well as to permanent staff.

10.0 Work-based students

Issues

In addition to learning through their academic studies and studio projects, architecture students learn and develop during (and from) periods of employment in architectural practice. Traditionally, full-time and part-time students have been characterised by different learning needs and styles, but such distinctions are becoming increasingly blurred, as pressures of student debt lead growing numbers of 'full-time' students to take on substantial term-time work in local architectural practices.

Full-time students who work during term time

Schools of architecture now need to recognise this reality and to support their full-time students with guidance on levels and types of term-time work, and in timetabling arrangements and studio access hours.

Full-time students learning during professional experience employment

CABE's research into student retention and progression (2004) suggests that periods of supervised 'professional experience employment', generally taken between the Part 1 and Part 2 stages of the course, can be vulnerable stages in the programme for some students. Women and minority ethnic UK students, and international students studying in the UK, reported serious difficulties in securing the range and level of professional experience needed to complete their qualification.

Part-time students

Traditionally, part-time study has contributed to widening student participation, and to diversity in architecture, by providing a path to qualification for students unable to afford the costs associated with full-time study, or whose abilities and ambitions have developed beyond university architecture course frameworks. Here learning in practice is an often under-exploited backdrop to their academic studies and design studio projects.

These students face significant pressures and multiple challenges, ranging from timetabling work and study commitments, to reconciling the

sometimes conflicting expectations and values of their employing office and their school of architecture. Retention rates are lower, and complaints that what is learned in practice is insufficiently recognised or harnessed in their architecture school, are often heard.

Work-based student numbers predicted to increase

Pressures in student funding, growing student numbers, changing attitudes to work-based and life-long learning, and advances in distance learning technologies are feeding into proposals for new part-time architecture programmes. These are characterised by flexible student-centred learning and the inclusion of work-based studies and projects.

Such developments have been welcomed as supporting student diversity in architecture, but for flexible student centred learning to succeed, it will need not only to be well structured and resourced, but needs to value student diversity.

Good Practice Points

10.1 Support 'Year out' and post-Part 2 professional experience employment

- Recognise the anxieties, and lack of familiarity with UK professional networks, amongst students from non-UK and from non-traditional student backgrounds.

- Introduce preparation for professional experience employment at an early enough stage for them to ask questions about developing a job interview portfolio, and practice CV writing and design, work search and interview skills.

- Establish peer learning for students to discuss and practice these skills.

- Provide opportunities to ask about working in architectural practice, and to observe how an office works, by establishing a diverse range of 'mentoring' practices third year students can visit in small groups.

- Check that professional experience employers are signed up to requirements of the RIBA Professional Experience and Development

Record, use the PEDR Student Employment Contracts and are familiar with the employer areas of this website.

▪ Use a system such as the RIBA's PEDR during periods of professional experience employment – starting with the 'year out'. In addition to providing evidence of professional experience required for the 'Part 3' examination in professional practice, it is a framework for developing professional awareness and self-appraisal skills.

▪ Maximise learning, individual support and use of staff time by replacing the routine annual visit to students in their employing office with regular group e-mails; prompt e-feedback on their PEDR quarterly summaries; well planned practice-related assignments and recall days. This would enable more time to be allocated to dealing with individual problems for which an office visit may be of value.

10.2 Develop on-line and web-based learning resources

▪ Maximise study time for part-time students, by developing high quality on-line learning resources, and clear and accessible information about learning objectives, study programmes and submission deadlines.

▪ Establish intranet communication for exchange and peer support amongst geographically scattered part-time students.

▪ Use regular group e-mails to maintain student/tutor relationships, and strengthen students' involvement and identification with their study programme.

▪ Use an e-learning system that requires students to check in on a regular basis.

10.3 Foster independent study, research and analytic skills

▪ Extend university learning development resources with targeted departmental handouts, web-based information and assignments that will help mature part-time students develop confidence and ability in the subject and study skills areas they find most unfamiliar or challenging. Provide mechanisms for accessing library materials remotely.

- Provide references to other resources students can access remotely, such as the RIBA's Information and Library services, and Professional Experience and Development Resource (PEDR); or museum and gallery information.

- Introduce students to the RIBA Professional Experience and Development Resource (PEDR) website, for its information, learning resources and guidance, and also for checklists on good employment practice and model student employment contracts.

- Engage and confirm commitment through individual Learning Plans and Learning Contracts that give reference to their learning through practice.

10.4 Monitor student learning and development

- Back up on-line resources with well-publicised events involving contact with tutors and other students. Use these to monitor on-line learning by requiring submission of short learning diary summaries BEFORE the event.

- Use learning diaries, Student Personal Development Plans, and recording frameworks like the PEDR, to develop self-awareness and confidence.

- Use these recording and monitoring systems to identify vulnerable students – maybe in the studio or in their written work; perhaps struggling to find professional experience employment, or in a difficult employment situation.

10.5 Ensure teaching staff are appropriately briefed and skilled

- Ensure staff, and in particular, part-time tutors, have the necessary briefing, understanding and skills to facilitate learning amongst mature part-time students.

- Ensure staff engage with, and support, the development of vulnerable students. Actions can range from arranging learning support and mentoring, to making visits to students on work placements, or reducing financial pressures and increasing study time by helping students to access financial support and bursaries.

- Ensure there are staff with sufficient knowledge of practice to convincingly support students in integrating learning from practice with their learning in academia.

- Ensure staff recognise the timetabling pressures of part-time students and are scrupulous about maintaining their own timetable commitments with them.

- Include architects suitably experienced in practice amongst guest critics when reviewing design work by mature part-time students.

10.6 Integrate practice-based students into programme frameworks

- Engage the experience, interests and ambitions of part-time work-based students in the choice of design projects and written assignments.

- Fuel their passion for architecture, and their commitment to the programme, by offering opportunities for discovery and development they won't find in practice.

- Strengthen peer support and learning by nurturing peer networks.

- Arrange projects and events that mix part-time with full-time students, and draw on the strengths of both to support the learning and development of all.

- Foster their sense of identity - as students and as student architects – by promoting the benefits of membership of organisations such as university architecture societies, ARCHAOS (the architecture student network) and RIBA Student Membership.

10.7 Include students' employers in programme organisation and support

- Emphasise the three-way partnership between student, university and employer by including the employers of part-time work-based students in their learning contracts.

- Help employers include their student employee's study commitments in their staffing and workload planning by keeping them informed about

programme activities and significant dates – perhaps through a termly group e-mail.

- Reinforce the role of employers in the teaching and learning process, and look for ways to engage them – perhaps as guest lecturers, or guest tutors or critics.

- Invite employers to significant events, like annual lectures, end of year shows.

11.0 Further reading and reference materials

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Access and Admissions

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Construction Industry Council Equal Opportunities Panel, 2002, "Building Visions", career video giving good introduction to working in construction industry professions, with section on architecture and strong diversity message in the young professionals profiled. Produced by the To preview and order copies see: http://www.cic.org.uk/BuildVisions/index.shtml

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http://www.studyoverseas.com/f_uk.htm: Information on UK Scholarships available to overseas students:

http://www.intstudy.com/: General advice and information for overseas students:

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Supporting Learning in Practice

www.pedr.co.uk: 'RIBA 'Professional Experience and Development RESOURCE': website developed by the RIBA to support student learning during periods of professional work experience. Areas for students, their employers and professional studies advisers. Model employment contracts and information to support fair employment. Free information, guidance and links to resources to support learning in practice. The site hosts the:

'RIBA Professional Experience and Development RECORD':a secure area of the PEDR site where students complete individual professional experience records in preparation for the 'Part 3' examination. Includes templates for employer comments and reports to their PSA, and summary sheets for

submission at the Part 3 Examination. Has phone and e-mail links to RIBA Education for technical support and individual queries.

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