

Executive Summary

Institution-Led Subject Review:

**Architectural Technology; Architecture; Business and Management and Land,
Construction, Real Estate and Surveying**

Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment

12-14 November 2019

Institution-Led Subject Review (ILSR) is the University's process to formally review and plan future enhancement of its taught provision leading to academic awards. The Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, one of eleven cognate Schools within the University, delivers the following subject areas, which were the focus of the ILSR:

- Architectural Technology
- Architecture
- Business and Management
- Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying

The review was informed by consideration of:

- the *Reflective Analysis* document prepared by the School;
- the Academic Quality Officer's summary report on key issues arising from quality assurance processes since the subjects were last reviewed in November 2014;
- the note of a meeting of internal Panel members held on 28 October 2019;
- an event organised by the University including an invited Panel comprising external academic experts and practitioners, a Student School Officer from another School, and senior members of staff from other Schools who met with a range of internal and external stakeholders.

After due consideration of the documentation and following discussions at the event, the Panel **confirmed** that it was satisfied that the School had provided an effective, comprehensive and reflective account of its current situation. Furthermore, the Panel was satisfied that the School had effective quality assurance arrangements in place.

The Panel wished to highlight a number of **commendations**, arising from discussions during the event, which are detailed below.

- (i) The School's rigorous self-reflection in the *Reflective Analysis* and during discussions, which provided the Panel with a thorough understanding and appreciation of what had been achieved within specific and challenging climates.

- (ii) The diversity of the staff team, which provided a rich learning and teaching culture benefitting both students and staff.
- (iii) The commitment and professionalism of the staff, which was evident in the high levels of support, provided to students and alumni.
- (iv) The high quality facilities of the School hosted in the Sir Ian Wood Building where design was at the centre of the workspaces and subject identities were evident.
- (v) The work of the Architectural Technology Course Team to achieve consistently high satisfaction rates in the National Student Survey (NSS) and to be considered as a leader in the subject area.
- (vi) The improved standard of graduates in recent years and the evidence of the staff's significant practical experience.
- (vii) The School's valuable outreach work to encourage more women and students from MD20 backgrounds into the construction industry.

The Panel wished to make a number of recommendations which are detailed below. A number of these recommendations spanned across the subjects. The Panel wished to advise that recommendations detailed as a matter of urgency should be addressed within **three months**.

(i) School Vision

The School had identified its vision as:

"To be internationally recognised as a school which nurtures and inspires individuals to create, communicate and reflect on the use of the best new knowledge in a wide variety of disciplines, to produce buildings, physical environments, and other constructions that are highly valued by society." (Reflective Analysis, page 10)

The Panel agreed the current vision was not effectively capitalising on the School's identity or key strengths, and was restricted by a lack of promoting its unique selling points (USPs). It was acknowledged the School was already delivering high quality courses within its subject areas but this needed to be translated and recognised in a revised vision. The associated Implementation Plan (*Reflective Analysis*, pages 77-79) detailed the School's priorities but the timelines did not reflect the urgency that was clear from discussions.

The Panel **recommended** the School review and agreed a common vision as **a matter of urgency**.

(ii) Unique Selling Points (USPs)

During the ILSR process, the strengths that already existed within the School were apparent yet understated externally. If reinforced and promoted through a successful marketing narrative, the School could achieve a strong national reputation.

The Panel **recommended** the School clarified their USPs to take to market **as a matter of urgency**.

(iii) Course Portfolio

The Panel noted the School's ambitions and priorities in relation to the course portfolio (*Reflective Analysis*, pages 69-74). It was agreed the portfolio needed to be rationalised; however, the activity needed to be rigorous and creative in light of a revised vision and the School's current economic situation. The cycle of course development, validation, lack of recruitment and ultimately cessation needed to be avoided, especially due to noted staff time constraints and the deficit presenting even more of an investment challenge.

The Panel **recommended** the School confirmed the plan for its course portfolio **as a matter of urgency**.

(iv) International Marketing

The decline in international recruitment was explored in relation to marketing. The Panel identified that poor marketing may have been a symptom of an unclear vision at School level and challenges within the University's central marketing resource since the last ILSR. However, it would be improved by a better understanding of the School's USPs and enhanced links already established between the School and the Marketing Department.

The Panel **recommended** the School continued to work with the Marketing Department and implement a School-specific international marketing plan.

(v) Senior Team

The Panel had a number of meetings with the Senior Team, which consisted of the Head of School and the four Academic Strategic Leads. It was acknowledged that the Team had been working under considerable pressure with limited resources. However, it was agreed that the strategic leadership required review and development.

The Panel **recommended** the responsibilities of the Senior Team be clarified to ensure a successful federated rollout of School priorities.

(vi) Collaboration

Some areas of the School were on an upward trajectory and there were evidently areas of good practice. The Panel agreed it was important to share learning from these areas through collaboration between Course Teams, especially from Architectural Technology as a recognised leader in its subject area. Staff from across the School's individual subject disciplines had been proactive collaborators coming together to discuss course developments, research proposals and consultancy projects. Collaborative practice should be seen as a great opportunity and strength of the School, offering distinctiveness in the market. The Panel noted that collaborative practice had been highlighted in the last ILSR but had not been sufficiently embedded and structured throughout the curriculum. Further increasing such activity would result in a number of benefits; translating practice into improved NSS results; reinforcing the subject offering USP, and being able to state collaboration as a core part of a revised vision, which would be a useful marketing tool.

The Panel **recommended** collaborative practice be further embedded within the School and future opportunities explored by the Senior Team.