
Union Internationale des Architectes • International Union of Architects

Recommended Guidelines for the UIA Accord On Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice Policy on Accreditation/Validation/Recognition

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Accord Policy on Accreditation/Validation/Recognition

That courses must be accredited/validated/recognized by an independent relevant authority external to the university at reasonable time intervals (usually no more than five-years), and that the UIA, in association with the relevant national organizations of higher education, develop standards for the content of an architect's professional education that are academically structured, intellectually coherent, performance-based, and outcome-oriented, with procedures that are guided by good practice.

Introduction

Accreditation of educational programs in architecture, whether sought voluntarily by the educational institution or exacted by relevant authorities, seeks primarily to ensure, in the public interest, that the standards attained by successful graduates of the program are adequate with regard to the design, technical, and professional skills and ethical formation required for competent architectural practice.

The principles in any accreditation policy permit flexibility of approach while ensuring independent standards for the accrediting body and the pursuit and maintenance of high standards in educational endeavor and in the accrediting process itself.

The critical criteria in a satisfactory educational program involve thorough assessment in accordance with previously defined and agreed criteria, by a group of assessors external to the school of architecture who are competent by training and experience to evaluate architecture programs and make recommendations for their direction or modification. External assessors may be appointed by the state in which the architectural program is run, by an independent professional architectural organization, nominated as external examiners by the school of architecture itself, or by some other satisfactory method. The system of appointing the assessor may vary depending upon whether the educational institution is publicly or privately run. An independent relevant authority can comprise representatives of a professional body, such as an institute or chamber of architects, or a nongovernmental organization of architects or schools of architecture; it can be a national or state government, or its delegated representatives, or an organization of external examiners. The process of validation of programs will occur periodically, and a satisfactory method of accreditation will involve the review of the work of all students passing through a school of architecture on at least one occasion during their educational program. Recognizing the differences between governance of public and private institutions, consistency must be provided both in the accreditation/recognition/validation process and the end result.

Accreditation procedures vary depending on whether the education programs in question are proposed for establishment, recently set up and not previously accredited, or the subject of proposed change. In every instance, the assessors will be provided with documentation in advance of their visit to the school; review examination papers and scripts, studio programs and studio work; course syllabus and examples of course work; and meet with students and staff. They may also look at the pedagogic, professional, and research output of the faculty/staff. On conclusion of such review, the assessors will provide the school with a program report that will make recommendations for accreditation and may make suggestion for changes in the educational program or impose conditions for accreditation.

1. Criteria for Accreditation Courses, Programs, and Examinations in Architecture

The core knowledge and skills required of a competent architect, set down by the relevant organizations for higher education and recognized in the UIA Accord on Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice, are as set down in the Fundamental Requirements of an Architect from the Accord.

These skills are mastered by the architect through education, training, and experience, and educational programs in architecture set out to help the student of architecture acquire such ability, knowledge, understanding, and skills to the extent that these may be required within such a program.

The UIA advocates that education for architects should be of no less than five years duration, principally delivered on a full-time basis in an accredited architectural program in an accredited/validated university, while allowing flexibility for equivalency. In some countries, education is followed by a period of practical experience/training/internship. During this education and training process, the levels of ability reached by the student of architecture in the fundamental requirements listed will advance in line with the progress of the student's study, and validation of the relevant educational program will take account of the varying levels of attainment reasonably to be expected at the appropriate moments.

The knowledge and abilities required of architects have changed and will continue to change to reflect society's expectations. The UIA will review its Recommended Guidelines for the Accord Policy on Accreditation/Validation/Recognition from time to time to ensure its continual relevance.

The relative weighting ascribed to the different criteria listed and the relative degree of importance of skill to be attained will vary from country to country and from time to time. In different countries, for reasons of tradition and deliberate choice, educational institutions may themselves ascribe different weighting to the various criteria, which, in turn, will be influenced by the precise missions generally undertaken by architects within that country. In every instance, the educational program will be based on a syllabus that will incorporate topics and subjects derived from or comparable to those listed. The accreditation criteria will include a review of the syllabus. The syllabus will vary depending on the stage of studies, whether at intermediate or final examination level and whether before or after any period of practical training.

2. Methods of Accreditation

Accreditation is carried out by properly constituted authorities that are independent of the institution housing the program to be accredited. Accrediting authorities must be competent by way of training and experience. This will indicate that persons undertaking accreditation work have experience in architectural design, practice, ethical standards, and training. Frequently an accreditation panel will comprise nominees of more than one of the types of organizations listed and, in every instance, involves accreditation by established members of the architectural profession. This will help promote both objective evaluation and a broad and inclusive view of architecture.

In every instance, when educational institutions participate in accreditation procedures, the educational institution cannot participate in the procedure for accrediting its own program.

3. Procedures for Accrediting Educational Programs in Architecture

The nature and detail of procedures to be adopted by an accrediting board will vary depending on the culture and educational practices of the country concerned. They will also vary on whether an educational program is being considered in advance of its establishment; examined for the first time; has been established for some time and has previously been accredited; or, having either failed to achieve accreditation or having had a previous accreditation withdrawn, is presented for accreditation afresh for a further time.

Accreditation procedures will also vary depending on whether one or more stages in the process are to be accredited. In some countries, accreditation procedures involve a three-stage process: after three and five years respectively in the academic educational program and on conclusion of an agreed period of practical training. In other countries the process will involve one or two stages.

Accreditation procedures involve the review by the assessors of the content of an educational program and of the standards achieved within that program. The assessment is made on the basis of information provided by the educational institution with regard to the program, syllabus, details of studio programs and examination scripts, and reports of external examiners; a self-appraisal by the educational institution; and, during a visit to the institution, on meetings with the head of the school program staff and students and inspection of student work and facilities

Where an institution is proposing major changes to an existing course or proposing to introduce a new course, it may be helpful to undertake a preliminary assessment by an independent relevant authority as to whether the content, structure, and resources of the proposed program are such as to be likely to achieve accreditation of the course and its graduates. Information that will be useful in such an assessment would include a description of the context of the proposal, philosophical approach proposed, and proposed academic program. Such a description might include a course diagram, details of the course framework, requirements to complete the course, and details of lecture syllabi and contact hours for each subject.

4. Documentation and Visiting Methods

Where accreditation is being sought either on an initial or ongoing basis for an already-established educational program, documentation to be provided by the educational institution to the accrediting authority might include:

- A brief description of the parent educational institution, with a statement of factors within the national, regional, and urban context that influence the nature of the educational institution;
- A brief description of the history of the course;
- The philosophical approach, mission, and vision to architectural education;
- An indication of any characteristics in the background of students that influence the direction of courses offered;
- A summary of academic staff profile, including nonteaching activities and other duties including research, publications, professional work, and community involvement;
- A statement of physical resources, including studios, teaching space and equipment, laboratory and workshops, library facilities and resource centers, computers, and information systems;

- A note of decision-making networks and management structure;
- A complete description of the academic program, including a description of the program framework, requirements to complete the program, and other requirements for graduation; lecture syllabi; details of studio programs; and copies of course handbooks;
- Statistical information on student enrollment numbers, numbers of graduations, staff numbers, and the staff/student ratio;
- A self-appraisal by the school of its education policy--taking account, where appropriate, of reports provided by previous accreditation boards and discussing development since any previous accreditation--to cover issues in external examiners' reports, changes in resource provisions, critical evaluation of course objectives, special features of the course, and other relevant matters.

The accrediting authority visits the educational institution and reviews the program *in situ*. During the visit, an exhibition of work completed by students over a period of at least 12 months prior to the visit will be helpful. Such exhibition should comprise a range of studio work, with programs attached for each year of the course arranged as far as possible to show the development of the curriculum throughout the program. A range of the written and drawn work in each year of the program should be exhibited so that the level of attainment of students in each of the areas as set out as fundamental requirements for an architect can be assessed. Presented work should include a representative sample of studio portfolios and examination scripts for the highest, average, and lowest pass grades in each subject, and these should be complemented by records of examination and assessment results for all years of the course in all subject areas.

When inspecting the educational program *in situ*, the accrediting authority may wish to undertake meetings and discussions with the program teachers, including the head of the school or department, studio and specialist staff, and external examiners. The authority may also talk with students of the program, both as a body and/or individually. Subject for discussion as part of the assessment process might include methods of educational assessment; the content of project work and lecture courses; and the relation of lecture courses to project work, the use of specialist teachers, and future developments.

5. Reporting Procedures

An accrediting authority will provide a written report on the educational program on conclusion of the visit to the program. Such a report will validate and supplement the written information provided by the educational institution and convey the accrediting authority's view of the quality of education in terms of student performance in the course under review. Procedures might include methods of ensuring such report is free from factual error, is treated confidentially, and is seen by all relevant parties. An accrediting report will normally recommend accreditation of the educational program for a fixed period of no more than five years' duration.