

## Feedback for the QAA SBS Advisory Group for Architecture

### Overview

Students Organising for Sustainability ([SOS-UK](#)) has been working with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges ([EAUC](#)) to support QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) advisory groups with increasing student voice in their process and integrating sustainability and climate justice into their subject. This is critical and necessary work that will help ensure SBSs are representative and inclusive, whilst providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to go into green careers and support our collective sustainable future. On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024, SOS-UK held an online student consultation to gather views relating to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture. Current students and recent undergraduates from a diverse variety of UK universities reviewed the current SBS through a sustainability and climate justice lens, finding positive examples and developing suggestions for how the SBS can become more accessible, inclusive, sustainable and forward-facing.

### Positive elements of the existing document

- Students appreciated the focus on the collaborative nature and extent of Architecture, discussing how Architects must necessarily work with experts in other disciplines, such as Engineering, in order to realise their designs.
- They enjoyed the reference to '*a critical understanding of the uncertainty and limits of knowledge and how it is developed*', and discussed how important this uncertainty is in Architectural study.
- Students praised references to practical learning environments and emphasised the benefits of applied learning and placement activities.

### Suggestions for improvements or amendments

- Students referenced the significant current lack of content relating to sustainability and urged the group to use a forward-looking approach, that safeguards the future of this subject and of our planet. The group discussed the intersectionality of sustainability, and urged the group to also deeply consider justice issues, such as the intersection of homelessness, migration and architecture, and how this can be interwoven into every section of the document.
- Students particularly had a discussion about responsible design and future-proof buildings, along with considered the ecological impact of design and construction, and would like to see this critical area reflected.
- Students reflected on the 'exclusive' nature of studying Architecture, particularly in relation to the heavy financial cost of study compared to some other subjects, and shared a collective view that this must be considered and mitigating factors put in place within the new SBS.
- Students highlighted that the current document uses complex academic language and is not accessible for those with dyslexia, or younger students considering the subject for study at higher education. They suggested that an executive summary or shorter, bullet-point style document is produced that is aimed towards students in further or secondary education.
- Students state that the new iteration of this document must address the issue of emerging technologies, especially AI, although there was differing opinion within the group over the role that it should play. Some students particularly reflected on the environmental impact of AI data centres, and the potential negative impact on student knowledge and skills, and others were excited about the possibilities that AI may open up for Architecture.

### The future of Architecture

- Students were highly positive in regards to the future of Architecture. They were excited about increasing meaningful representation of student voices within the QAA advisory groups and review process, and wished the panel to know that they were eager for the new Subject Benchmark Statement to be widely circulated to students following publication in 2026.

For more information about this student consultation, including more detailed feedback, please contact Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager for Education at SOS-UK: [hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org](mailto:hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org).