



University College Dublin
School of Architecture

Reuben Irvine
Competition Authority
Parnell House
14 Parnell Square
Dublin 2

12 January 2004

Re: Study of Competition in Professional Services in Ireland:
Consultation Document 2
ARCHITECTS

Dear Sirs

We have read with great interest the report on the Study of Competition in Professional Services in Ireland: Consultation Document 2: Architects, and in particular the comments and recommendations relating to education and training of architects. With regard to Section Three, Barriers to Entry, we note the points made by the Authority on the subject of Third Level places.

With regard to Consultation question Q7 we reply as follows:

In a submission to the HEA in 2002, we noted that there were insufficient places relative to demand, and also, that the fact that the existing Schools were both located in Dublin, disadvantaged students from other regions. If there is to be a third School of Architecture in the jurisdiction it should be located in a provincial centre. We believe that, with regard to the training required to provide services to the public, there is more to the matter than increasing numbers.

The School of Architecture at UCD has, for some time, recognised the desirability of increasing its intake. This was for two reasons.

1. It was recognised that the present intake represented a small fraction of those wishing to enter architecture, as witnessed by the high number of first choices for architecture in UCD via the CAO.

2. It was recognised that some degree of diversification in the educational profile of architects was required, in order to reflect changes taking place in building procurement, to exploit emerging directions, and to permit a more substantive participation in research in the field. The emerging areas of essential specialisation are seen to be, energy applications in buildings, urban and building conservation and urban design. The imperative to enhance research in the field of architecture is an inevitable development if this country is to take advantage of the "knowledge-based economy" into the future.

Although measures to address these matters have been taken at postgraduate level, this necessary expansion in intake has not taken place in UCD to date because of limitations of space and staff numbers. Indeed, space and staffing provision are under severe pressure in catering for the numbers already participating. Application has been made to the HEA for additional resources to permit expansion. To date that application has not been successful.

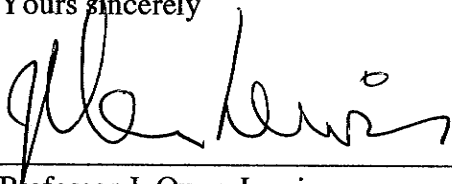
For the same reasons, we have been unable to respond to the requirement for part-time architectural education, although we might wish to do so.

With regard to Consultation question Q8 we reply as follows:

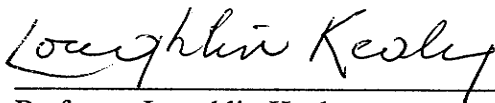
We are in general agreement with the Study's assessment, with a qualification. Additional places alone will not meet the present requirements for architects. We would argue that the question of diversity is an equal, if not a greater priority. The need for a broader range of architectural services, is, we believe, already manifest, and is unlikely to be addressed by the establishment of a third School. There is an issue of critical mass involved, as your report points out.

We hope that these comments are of assistance to the Authority. We append an extract from the proposal submitted to the Higher Education Authority in 2002, on the subject of diversification and increasing intake, which we trust will be of interest.

Yours sincerely



Professor J. Owen Lewis
Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture



Professor Loughlin Kealy
Head of School

Extract from.....

A PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE:

Introduction of undergraduate diversification

Increasing student intake

Background

1 For some time, the experience of the architectural profession has indicated that a wider range of professional skills than are at present achieved within the curriculum of existing Schools of Architecture, is required from practicing architects. In recent years, the professional body, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, has provided a range of continuing professional development courses, aimed at upgrading its members' skills within established areas of expertise. However, other areas of need require the provision of opportunities to develop particular areas in depth within the overall framework of architectural education. To date, the School at UCD has responded by providing specialist postgraduate courses, one of which, the Diploma and Masters in Building Project Management, was established following an approach from the RIAI.

It has become clear that changes in undergraduate education and training are also required, both as a preparation for a more diversified practice environment, and as a necessary foundation for the development of research in the field of architecture.

2 In the wider context, the shortage of architects has been in the public domain for some time. In the recent past and in the light of current construction sector demands and the targets of the National Plan, the Minister for the Environment has commented on the need for additional professionals in the sector, including architects. The Strategic Report on the Construction Industry issued by the Construction Industry Council, and other reports on the construction sector, have also pointed to the need for increased numbers of architects into the foreseeable future. This situation, while becoming more acute in the last two years, has been in the making for some time. Intake into the School of Architecture at UCD has been kept static, because of shortage of space. The School has been requested by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland to consider increasing its intake.

- 3 This document sets out a proposal as a considered response to these matters. It proposes to make provision for undergraduate diversification and to increase intake to the architectural course in order to permit this necessary educational development.

Curriculum Diversification: general considerations

- 1 The existing Schools in the Republic, at UCD and DIT, both administer a curriculum whose professional remit is predicated on the Architects' Directive of the EU, and which is accredited quinquennially by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. The UCD programme is also accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects. This accreditation had been sought in the past as a means of widening the employment prospects of UCD graduates. It is maintained in order to provide a form of international benchmarking.
- 2 While other countries have developed a curriculum profile, which allows for diversification within the undergraduate curriculum, the architectural education provided in Ireland at this level has been geared towards the generalist practitioner.
- 3 The School of Architecture at UCD has anticipated the diversification challenge, and laid the groundwork for response through its development of specialist postgraduate courses and in its research programmes. Specialist degrees are awarded in Urban and Building Conservation, Building Project Management and Urban Design. The last is delivered jointly with the Department of Regional and Urban Planning. Among the research areas with the potential for specialist professional application, is that of energy applications in buildings, in which the School draws on the expertise of the Energy Research Group. The establishment on the Richview campus of Urban Institute Ireland provides a further underpinning of the drive towards diversification at undergraduate level.

As a result of these developments, the School is, in many respects, ideally placed to respond to the diversification challenge.

Diversification and the Curriculum

- 1 Three areas of diversification are identified at this stage. They are described in sequential order:
 - a. The first area of diversification is that of energy applications in buildings. The School has the expertise in staffing, and an established international reputation in research and dissemination activities, the latter using advanced as well as conventional technologies. The undergraduate programme already provides introductory courses in this area. There is real potential in this area for the development of a new type of professional architect who can exploit creatively an interface with engineering and building physics.
 - b. The second area is that of building conservation. The School has established undergraduate courses in this area, and a Masters course of international repute. It has a significant record of research in this area also. It has become a recognised area of professional specialisation internationally and recently in Ireland also.
 - c. Urban design is emerging as a major area in which expertise is required nationally. The School has an undergraduate option and a Masters programme in the area, as well as an established consultancy record.

- 2 The programme leading to the professional degree of Bachelor of Architecture is in two parts: the first part provides a grounding in the intellectual and physical skills required in architecture, and leads to the intermediate degree of BSc (Architectural Science); the second part extends the student's ability to investigate in depth and provides the knowledge and range of skills which will prepare students both for careers in architectural practice and for advanced studies. At present, the programme is geared mainly towards development through design. The dual structure permits the introduction of diversification post-BSc.

- 3 The intention of the intermediate degree is to provide an opportunity for students to adjust their career paths at that point, with the possibility of transferring to sister disciplines such as planning or landscape design. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of students leaving architecture after the BSc in order to explore different options, although these numbers are still small in relation to those opting to continue. Providing additional options within the Bachelor of Architecture degree will improve retention and the development of a broader range of student abilities.

The School has a policy of permitting suitably qualified students from other institutions to transfer to the fourth year course at UCD. Thus the School intake occurs at first year and at fourth year.

Challenges/benefits

- 1 The Problem of Critical Mass: At present the numbers in the post-BSc programme are such as to make diversification problematical. If diversification were introduced, it would be necessary to provide at least two alternatives to the current programme, in order to avoid a "best option" and "second best" polarisation. The additional options should account for approximately 20, with the balance remaining in the mainstream programme. To permit this, overall numbers should increase by about one-third. Such an increase would have additional benefits.

Increased intake would improve the School's ability to respond to changing demographics and social need. It is foreseen that "second chance" education will be a significant factor in student intake in the future. At present the School has a policy of admitting mature students, but in spite of demand, can admit only very small numbers annually. In addition, there would be scope for increasing "New ERA" intake and for re-ordering certain courses on a credit system to facilitate part-time attendance and access by students of other disciplines.

A larger intake would provide an opportunity to introduce a "conversion"-type approach aimed at enhancing the intake of architectural technicians. Again because of the capacity issue, the School currently admits only small numbers and can make very limited provision within its curriculum to allow for skills already acquired.

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