

LETTERS

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Schools need a technical focus

I noticed that Neil Spiller is quoted as justifying the length of architecture courses by comparison with other professional training (*New* June 7).

He picks out medicine, appropriately, as it matches architecture in terms of length of course. Medical students need the long course in order to learn about anatomy, pharmacology, and all the other non-glamorous parts of their subject.

Architects also need to master unglamorous bits, such as building technology, materials structures, building science, UK construction law etc. But the schools, with a very few notable exceptions, fail to cover these parts of our subject, claiming that the



Architecture students need technical training too.

students will pick it up when they work in offices.

It's a bit like a medical school teaching exotic medicine while ignoring the basics on the basis that the doctors will pick it up when they start practising.

By all means let's hang on to our 5+2-year training model but the schools must accept that there has to be some hard technical training during those five years. To do

otherwise seems to me to be fraudulent given the high cost of tuition.

If the schools haven't got the resources for this training, they should approach local architects, engineers, builders and surveyors to help deliver the appropriate technical content. I recall during my training at Newcastle in the 1970s we often had outside specialists give lectures or studio tuition.

So, to return to the original analogy, a graduate doctor is capable of treating patients. What do we reckon a graduate architect is capable of?

**Dan Kantorowich
Brigstock, Kettering**

Bridging the education gap

When the day comes that the RIBA Silver or Bronze Medal is awarded for a cleverly thought out, beauti-

fully articulated and well-detailed scheme for affordable housing, we will have started to bridge the gap between education and practice to the enrichment of both.

It is extraordinary that the educators (and the practitioners in their thrall) on the one hand love to decry what Margaret Thatcher did to the local authority architects' departments in the 1980s, and on the other then perpetuate the veneration of fatuous theoretical student schemes of almost no social value.

However, for this day to arrive we first have to contend with the belief of academics, such as the new head of the School of Architecture at the University of Central Lancashire (*Beats* May 31), that such a medal winner would be nothing but "efficient exploitable fodder" for practice.

**Simon Gill
London SW6**

Harrap's right on planning law

I enjoyed reading *Life Class* (June 14) – sharp and witty. It goes to the core of the psychology of most architects, who care about architecture.

Most importantly, Julian Harrap recommends that a piece of legislation should be introduced, stating that "planning applications should be signed by an architect".

It is about time that the RIBA gathered the courage to call on the government for this piece of legislation.

This would improve greatly the design of our townscapes, streets and urban environment – and would bring this country in line with most European countries.

**Tzena James
Kew, Surrey**

Aiming high on affordability

Your article (*New* June 14) tells us that Boris Johnson promises 400,000 new homes in the capital in the next 10 years and goes on to tell us that he has a target of 40,000 affordable homes a year.

The last mayor of London Ken Livingstone's intention was for 50% of the houses built to be affordable. That was obviously a modest ambition compared with Johnson's, whose figures suggest that 100% of the homes built should be affordable.

**Ron Heath
Loughton, Essex**

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