

The Canberra Accord and UIA Education Commission

by George Henderson (UK), Canberra Accord observer, January 2020

One of the great pleasures in attending meetings at the International Union of Architects (UIA) in Paris is the incomparable panorama from the 47th floor of Tour Montparnasse, home to the UIA Secretariat. Some say this is the finest view of the city because it is the only place from which the 56-storey tower, once voted the second ugliest building in the world, cannot be seen. Given its role as a global organisation representing the world's architects, the UIA seems perfectly suited to its historic Montparnasse neighborhood, which has always attracted people from the creative arts. This was especially true during the 1920s and 30s, when such writers and artists as Sartre, Hemingway, Picasso, and Matisse enjoyed its lively mix of cafés, bars, and theatres.

The UIA Education Commission (EDUCOM) and UNESCO-UIA Validation Council for Architectural Education (VCAE) currently comprise a 10-person steering committee and 16 members, drawn from 27 countries across all five regions of the UIA. They are led by two non-voting co-reporters, Marilys Nepomechie (United States) and Magda Mostafa (Egypt).



Left to right, Magda Mostafa, George Henderson, Marilys Nepomechie

The EDUCOM and VCAE are charged with advancing the quality of architecture programs globally, providing a forum for discussions on architecture education and overseeing the UNESCO-UIA validation system. The latter validates study programs and systems around the world and is managed by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) on behalf of the UIA. The work is underpinned by the principles and criteria set forth in the UNESCO-UIA *Charter for Architectural Education* (rev. ed. 2017), one of the core documents upon which the Canberra Accord is based.

The EDUCOM/VCAE met in Paris on 27 and 28 January 2020. Topics on the Education Commission agenda included a report on the UIA Council Meeting in Luxor, Egypt, in October 2019; an update on establishing a UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education; progress towards establishing a UIA student association (UIAS), which prompted a great deal of discussion; plans for EDUCOM and VCAE activities at the forthcoming UIA 27th World Congress in Rio de Janeiro in July; and collaboration with other UIA bodies and international organisations focused on architecture education.

The VCAE agenda focused on items related to the Canberra Accord. These included the UNESCO-UIA application for provisional membership in the Accord and the Accord report on its recent activities. Both items prompted questions and discussion. Other topics included a review of updates to the validation Procedures Manual (rev. ed. 2017); Validation Panel nominations and training; and a report by David Gloster, RIBA director of education, on recent and forthcoming validation visits. Jana Revedin represented UNESCO at the meeting.