

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from [ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk).

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	John McLaughlin		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University College Cork, Ireland.		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Masters in Architecture (design).		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-18	Date of Report:	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2018

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

**Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).**

Please extend spaces where necessary.

**1. Programme Structure** (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The programme has an unusual structure with the first year of the masters being based in practice. This structure seems to work very well and offers an excellent example of integration to the current debate about architectural education. The students entering the second year of the masters were offered a compelling choice of design units with a diverse range of themes to choose from.

**2. Academic Standards** (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

The academic standard is high and comparable to other schools that I am familiar with. The school achieves the difficult balance of being intellectually ambitious and simultaneously having its feet on the ground. This is an excellent combination that is difficult to achieve.

**3. The Assessment Process** (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The assessment process was very rigorous and fair. The involvement of an external and internal assessors in each panel seemed to work well. The moderation of marks between panels was carefully done to ensure fairness to students.

4. **Examination of Master's Dissertations** (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

I examined design studio work. (Written dissertations were examined by a separate panel of external examiners). I found the marking schemes to be thorough and rigorous. Particular care was taken to ensure that the marking scheme was adapted to the different thematic units so that there was an equitable approach to marking the different outputs. There was a good number of marks at the higher levels of classification reflecting the high quality of the work.

5. **Year-on-Year Comments**

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

This was my first year examining at the WSA

6. **Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

The information sent to me was clear and concise and gave me a strong picture of the course structure and pace in advance of my visit. This was augmented by the briefing given on my first day as well as the excellent booklet of documents that had been prepared for me. At all times I had access to material and a clear picture of where to find it. The meetings with unit leaders and with students were well timed and were very informative.

7. **Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement** (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

As noted above, the diversity of teaching units on offer in the WSA is a real strength of the school, however the appointment of the unit leaders from year to year seems to be an issue since those who are not full-time academic staff don't seem to have notice or time to prepare their unit over the summer. This creates an imbalance and the school should review this arrangement to find ways to allow for multi-year appointments. The unit leaders might also benefit from more opportunities to talk to each other and to benchmark work against each other during the course of the year. This could be facilitated by having combined design reviews or a research symposium day.

The strongest student in the cohort had managed to align her research interests between her dissertation and her design studio work. The school should consider the timing of these modules so that it allows the opportunity to every student to achieve this level of integration.

In some design units the research phase of the projects went on too long leaving a very compressed period for the actual design project. The research phase could be structured to a specific time period (e.g. the first term) with a defined output at that stage. This would allow an opportunity for mid-year feedback and exchange/benchmarking of outputs.

The design thesis is somewhat burdened by having to also support the production of the technical requisites for ARB/RIBA. The school might review whether the fulfilment of these requirements could depend more on the M.Arch1 coursework as this seems to be a natural place for it, to liberate the final design thesis further.

The students were appreciative of the attempts to raise awareness of mental wellbeing and the relationship to work pressures. They felt however that there is a disconnect with this being referred centrally to university resources, and that it could be better dealt with within the school where their workload would be better understood – perhaps by a member of staff not directly involved in the course.

**8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)** (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

N/A

**9. Annual Report Checklist**

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of ‘No’.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	Y		
<b>Commenting on draft examination question papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
<b>Examination scripts</b>				
9.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A

<b>Coursework and practical assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining board meeting</b>				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
9.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	Y		
<b>Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:  
[externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk)

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