



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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).

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof William Firebrace		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Architectural Association		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Architecture <i>BSc in Architectural Studies</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-17	Date of Report:	13.06.17

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught stage** Examining Board in the case of **postgraduate Master's programmes**).

**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 Data Protection Act (1998).**

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

The course is well organised and provides a good learning and teaching framework. Both design units and also other modules have a high standard of programmes to inform and assist the students.

However the school needs to define a clearer identity in order to provide a stronger sense of purpose to the course.

This would in turn lead to decisions about the sequence of learning across the years. At present there are excessive differences between the years, and not enough lead from one into the next. This currently leads to a certain architectural vagueness.

First year is a good experimental foundation course, but lacks a definitive architectural outcome. A strong building project at the end of the year would bring it to a clearer conclusion and entry into second year. There could also be more interest in recording and notating sites.

Second year is competent, the students learn basic skills with an interesting project in the valleys. There could be more challenge on architectural flair and spatial understanding. The

students should also show their site research and analysis in order to locate their design projects in a specific location.

Third year has a good range of units with interesting programmes. However since the first part of the year is an over-extended urban planning project, the students arrive at their final project too late. Could there be an earlier quick design project? The top level is good, but many students needed to be challenged to produce more spatially refined projects.

I also looked through history and theory essays from all three years. The general standard is high, with some excellent essays. There could be less factual information (wiki-syndrome!) and more questioning and analysis. This applies in particular to the third year essay, where students could expand out into a more individual approach to writing. This third year essay is rather undervalued with only 10 points for the module – surely a little mean for a Russell Group University with bright students? More knowledge of and interest in contemporary architecture would assist raising the design standards

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

The academic standards are appropriate and equivalent to those in other universities. Many portfolios have very good work, but as the above comments suggest, the standard of some final projects needs raising.

## **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 for the design work appears to me very curious. The final marking is carried out by two assessors who have no previous knowledge of the work, plus a member of the unit staff. The student has only 10 minutes to present the work of a year, followed by questioning, the atmosphere is rather intimidating. The role of the external examiner is questionable, attending some reviews but remaining silent.

I would suggest:

1. There needs to be more provisional interim assessment so the students have some idea mid-year as to how they are doing and can react accordingly.
2. More account should be made of the first semester work.
3. Surely the unit staff should be providing the first marking, they know the student best and it is usually part of their job.
4. The current use of the external examiners is questionable. External examiners should not be overseeing the first marking progress, this is a misuse of their skill and experience. They cannot gain much overview of high-medium-low work since the marks are not yet known, and from this obtain an overall impression of the work. Examiners should really be independent from primary markers in order to give their own view on a range of work.

## **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

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

I notice from previous reports that comments have been made on the need to raise standards on the mid and lower range of portfolios, this remains an issue.

**5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

Good, I was well-prepared with the appropriate information.

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

- 1 The school should define more clearly its architectural aims.
- 2 Attention needs to be given to providing a clearer sequence between years one two and three, so there is a convincing learning strategy over the course.
- 3 In year three there should be a concentration on producing more refined design work.
- 4 The history and theory course should be given more weighting in third year, and in general the students could be encouraged to more architectural analysis and questioning.

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

## 8. 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>				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			N/A
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	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>				<b>N/A</b>
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			
<b>Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)</b>				<b>NA</b>
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			
8.30	<b>Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations.</b> <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

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

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE