

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

Cardiff University

McKenzie House
30-36 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0DE
Wales UK

Tel please see below
Fax +44(0)29 2087 4130

www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd

Tŷ McKenzie
30-36 Heol Casnewydd
Caerdydd CF24 0DE
Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig

Ffôn gweler isod
Ffacs +44(0)29 2087 4130

www.caerdydd.ac.uk

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr Mark Campbell		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Architectural Association		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Architecture / MArch Dissertation Module		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017/18	Date of Report:	12 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 structure and aims of the program are clear. The dissertation process of research, formulation, supervision and completion is laid-out in the Module Handbook. This structure provides the student cohort with a good framework, methodology and process within which to pursue their thesis.

Students are provided with opportunities to formulate and discuss their work with peers and faculty, which provides the potential for research streaming and cross-fertilisation. The range of supervisors and the general level of available supervisory support remain commendable.

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

The standard of the dissertations and quality of the students in defending the work was very good in relation to comparable institutions. The intellectual value of the dissertation module to student development is obvious and there were a number of well-produced dissertations over a wide range of topics. In general, the theses were of a higher academic standard than 2016/17 – this suggests that the trend of a

gentle decline in the academic standards over the previous two years has been arrested.

In general the formulation and execution of the dissertation topics seemed useful in furthering the student's engagement with architectural at a post-graduate level.

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 module is detailed, rigorous and fair. The Internal Assessment of the dissertations includes several readings, which generally provided a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the individual dissertations. However, there remain a few cases in which there was a marked disparity between internal readers's assessment and the actual intellectual achievement of the work.

The oral examination provides an invaluable opportunity for the student to discuss and defend their work in detail. In particular, the oral examination is commendable as it allows both a detailed assessment of the work and the opportunity for the student to relate the thesis to their overall interests at the conclusion of their degree. In order to fully benefit from the oral examination, students need to be effectively briefed on the requirements of that examination.

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

Compared to previous years, the sample of theses received for the 2017/18 examinations was skewed toward the median grades. There were no theses that received either low or high grades; instead these theses were reviewed during the External Examiners' meeting. The marking scheme and modes of assessment are appropriate and the standard of internal marking is consistent. As always, the internal moderation of internal assessment can be further refined in terms of adjudicating on a final mark in instances where internal markers significantly differ in their evaluation of a thesis. In cases where there is a 10% or more difference in internal marks the moderation board should review the thesis.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Overall, the standard and execution of the dissertations was an improvement on the 2016/17 and 2015/16 presentations, which exhibited a gentle decline in academic standard. This suggests that changes to the programme have been effective. As previously noted, the reduction in academic standard was reflected less in the quality of writing and presentation of the work, than in the depth, scope and experimentation of the subject research and investigation. The thesis module and faculty should be encouraged to allow the students to undertake more experimental approaches and subject areas.

The administration of the module remains exemplary.

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)

N/A

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

The rigor with which the assessment process is undertaken is commendable.

In particular, the final oral examination provides a useful forum in which to discuss the student's work and their approach to and knowledge of the topic. This allows an opportunity to correlate the written work with the student's knowledge of their chosen subject area, together with facilitating a discussion of the value of the dissertation to their overall architectural knowledge and future ambitions. In order to fully benefit from the oral examination, students need to be effectively briefed on the requirements of that examination.

In terms of enhancement, students would benefit from clearly defined group presentations and cross-subject discussions. The general engagement with topic research could be further stressed and developed. The adherence to a general methodology – in which the contextual theoretical formulation followed by case studies – is demonstrably useful in preparing weaker students to formulate and

complete the dissertation. It may prove worthwhile to reinvigorate the discussion of the research – stressing its value as an architectural investigation – with both individual students and in collective discussions. In particular, this would allow students to compare approaches and methodologies and share interests.

In the case of the most intellectually able students, it would also be productive to consider what other methods could be employed to push these dissertations further.

Finally, the module has a wide range of supervisors. It is worth considering how the module would operate with a smaller range of experienced supervisors, who would be able to collaborate for greater supervisory efficiency and moderation.

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

There have not been significant changes in academic standards across the four years of external examinations. Rather, as above, a gentle decline in standards appears to have been stabilised and future student cohorts should be further encouraged to be aware of the intellectual and practical significance of the thesis – it is a real opportunity for students to explore their individual architectural interests at a post-graduate level.

Programme faculty and administrators have effectively taken on external examiners suggestions regarding assessment recognition of the oral examination, overview moderation of the marking process (as a sampling for parity rather than a detailed moderation on the part of the external examiners), and matters of general process. All of these changes have been to the betterment of the programme.

The programme could be further developed through an encouragement of the most capable students being more experimental and provocative in the formulation and execution of their thesis topics, research and presentation. Finally, the programme may also benefit from reconsidering the number of supervisors within the programme. While the range and experience of these supervisors is appreciable, such a diversity can also raise issues around differences in supervisory methodology and matching to student subject areas.

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)
Programme/Course information				
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		
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Examination scripts				
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?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
Coursework and practical assessments				
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		
Clinical examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
Sampling of work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?			
Examining board meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with	Y		

	established procedures and to your satisfaction?			
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		
Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
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