



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.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Ulysses Sengupta		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Manchester School of Architecture		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Architecture		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-18	Date of Report:	12/08/2018

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 BSc (Architecture) is structured as a series of design briefs (set by different studios in year 3). The briefs encourage exploration of greater scale or depth as students' progress over the years. Studio is supported by seminars, lectures and reading. There was no explicit single direction for the programme running across all the years and work. In the majority, there appeared to be a value placed on craft and integration with existing contexts.

The BSc (Architecture) appears well structured with the three years focusing on different aspects. This does raise the question of whether there is an overall direction/ambition/identity (no matter the multiple routes through which this is approached). Can this be made explicit?

The first year is sees a number of design explorations. These are useful to get students into a design mind-set. However, creativity based on structural tectonics etc. could be more strongly represented even at this stage. More tectonic expression of the creative design solutions would be welcome along with a philosophical perspective on architectural design/structure and environmental design. The forms of

representation and drawing could also be explored as expressive elements in themselves in order to develop the idea of architectural drawing as a language of communication.

The second year focuses on the integration of technical thinking in design. This is an essential focus. The projects demonstrated a common brief and scale with a similar (acceptable) level of technical resolution. However, student feedback suggests a lack of understanding in how the skills learned in Yr1 could/should be successfully applied in Yr2. The understanding that technical considerations can act as primary design drivers rather than 'solutions' to spatial configurations could be formalised through development of a philosophical/theoretical aspect for the technical briefs. Indeed technical drivers could be the primary agendas for the briefs. The bridge between the two in terms of design and technical considerations not being separate could be both firmly communicated to students as focus and explored from Yr1 itself.

The third year offers a range of studio units. The briefs were diverse enough to result in a variety of responses at different scales and using different approaches to design. The amount of time spent on the development of a brief or initial idea differs widely resulting in a high degree of variation in terms of spatial, material and technological resolution. This may lead to marking and moderation processes based on trust or seniority. The alternative could be to openly publish the areas of primary focus for each studio and map enough outputs against common Yr3 output requirements.

Design Methods or the digital course in Yr2/3 (while strong in content and ambition) was not very successful in terms of integration with the work being carried out by the majority of students in studios etc. See suggestions in section (6.). This is partly a cultural issue with low levels need perceived for new digital skills.

General:

- The school has a visibly strong and successful focus on historic integration.
- The exploration of design using physical models was apparent and the development models in some units were obviously quite successful.
- The drawn outputs were of an acceptable standard, but the communication of tectonic detail using line/orthographic drawing could be improved.
- The use of multiple media and a greater engagement with digital tools for design (even if just for visualisation in as a first step) should be encouraged, as this (digital design) is a growing area of research and practice.
- The technical detailing presented was generic. Student responses indicated a lack of understanding of the philosophical/theoretical approaches to environmental and structural/tectonic design. Instead, these were often treated as tick boxes. More specifically focused exercises to explore specified aspects of technical design could be considered.
- Technical solutions were primarily based on strategy, with limited demonstration of measurable testing in the final or close to final designs. This could be improved.

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

The academic standards were appropriate in comparison to other UK HEI's.

While no obvious barriers exist, it might be possible to augment the existing avenues for the more ambitious students. A good example of this came from a student who had taken the initiative to go take a course (as an elective? or voluntarily.) in the Computer Science department. An elective system might be worth considering for humanities, engineering and digital design.

Visibility of work between studios and years should be considered. This is on a day-to-day basis and in terms of project-based engagement.

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

The process is generally clear. There is some concern about the students not having any idea of their tentative standing until they see their results for the year. This can potentially add to the nerves students encounter in a design course. Clear feedback on areas of strength and weakness with formative grade indications could be considered at the various submission stages.

The final stage of the moderation is currently a closed-door process. If this is the preferred method, some form of open (to all studio staff) feedback to studio leaders about the areas of success and weakness (i.e. the reasons for the final marking) could be considered. While the marking and moderation processes appeared to be fair, the publication of open marking criteria and/or feedback may help with transparency. The comparison between different studios in the final year of the BSc was a little bit unclear. While a suitable outcome was agreed by all - for the highest marks - a discussion and decision involving more teaching staff may be appropriate.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

N/A (1st Year)

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)

As a new examiner, I would have appreciated an introduction to the staff, programme and a walkthrough of work and processes. The fact that this did not take place is presumably a result of the very recent/last minute appointment and the fact that I could only arrive on day2. It would be good to have this remedied in the forthcoming year.

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

The initial attempt to develop a digital agenda within the program is noteworthy. This is especially the case given that the current demonstration of engagement with digital design mostly limited to visualisation. The feedback from the students and observable work from the samples of the digital program point to a lack of integration between the digital methods and the rest of the programme. In my experience, the

development of a digital program within a school of architecture cannot be undertaken from singular directions. Digital culture within architecture has multiple aspects and levels. The primary issue is to recognise that the development of a digital culture requires attention to at least the following aspects:

1. Digital skills development
2. Incorporation of digital theories
3. Engagement with digital methods for design

In addition, a strategic decision to engage with specific areas of digital design from the following broad categories may be a useful starting point:

1. Visualization (including videos and game engines etc.)
2. Manufacturing (including all forms of digital to physical, parametric/algorithm based design forms etc.)
3. Computation (including processes of data analysis and simulation)

Foreseeable difficulties/failures are based on:

1. A lack of resourcing. A digital culture can only be developed with multiple members of staff spread across the different strategic areas (such as studio teaching, specialist courses, problem solving/office hours) etc.
2. A lack of engagement by other non-digital design studios/staff. This is a significant issue resulting in a lack of integration even when resources are available. Staff coming from non-digital directions may benefit from training or at least exposure to digital possibilities that could add to their own research and teaching strengths.
3. The lack of a digital community. If there is only one studio or taught course per year involving digital methods, skills and/or theories, it is almost impossible for integration with other areas of strength to occur. A multi-input approach towards development of a significant digital community should be considered.

It may be useful to consider the desired outcome of the digital agenda for the school. E.g.:

1. Baseline Provision
2. Industry Ready
These two ambitions can be easily achieved through accredited courses. However, they are typically related to more technical schools or colleges with low research profiles.
3. General Provision
This is the widest model within schools of architecture E.g. Portfolio outputs and Tech integration. Improvements can be made by creating a digital culture by augmenting the general provision with research active staff led short compulsory digital workshops. There is a requirement to expand the cohort of digital researchers in the school to enable a minimum number of workshop choices and digital ateliers.
4. Academic Leader
This is model requires extremely high levels of investment into equipment and staff. It is potentially an inappropriate ambition for many schools with other primary agendas. The model would require an extremely large investment into infrastructure, laboratories/hardware, making workshops, and would require at least 50% digital studios across the undergraduate and master's levels, run by research active staff working in the digital context.
5. Future Digital Horizons
This model is skill based and emergent. It would require a large investment in

people from different disciplinary backgrounds and the formation of multiple research clusters/labs that specialize in different aspects at PhD and post doctorate levels. The model requires a combination of different digital/computational backgrounds with domain knowledge in architecture, planning and spatial design. The ambition for this direction requires that the community is grown rather than imported.

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

N/A.

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)
Programme/Course Information				
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	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
Marking Examination Scripts				
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?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
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?		N	
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				
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		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
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?			N/A
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

	N/A
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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