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**Sent by email to Mr David Short**

**13 January 2020**

Dear Mr Short,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2018/19**

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for BSc Architectural Studies.

Your report has been considered by colleagues in the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

**The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:**

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. The use of a case study to the Professional studies module to explore key topic areas.
3. The positive responses to previous external examiner comments.
4. The variety of studio units on offer in both year 2 & 3 is commendable.
5. The vertical studio project run towards Easter across years 1 and 2 together with the summer vacation primer project at the end of year 1 are also adding value to the course.

**Issues highlighted in your report and response provided by the School:**

1. **Programme Structure:** *Lack of skills progression in year 1 studio project work; Ensure that students at the end of year 1 are prepared for the desired standard for year 2.*



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We acknowledge the quality of skills demonstrated in the portfolio submissions from year 1 students in 2018/19. We conducted a significant review over the summer and re-wrote the year 1 design module learning outcomes and changed the structure and content of the design module to integrate more opportunities for students to learn, experiment and develop key skills. Alongside the design module, we have also revised the syllabus of the Design Principles and Methods 1 (DPM1) module that provides support to the Design module. We will review this again at the end of 2019/20 to ensure standards have improved and reinforce any areas identified as needing further development.

2. **Programme Structure:** Support for technical work in final projects; does the School have a policy on teaching CAD?

In terms of comments related to technology and in particular the Technology Report in relation to Architecture Technology 3, adjustments are being made and being trialed in the academic year 2019/20. In this academic year the Technology submission will be more integrated within the Architectural Design submission through the submission of a design portfolio which includes the technology submission. Technology remains a key Learning Outcome in the design module where students must 'integrate appropriate building structure, construction, environment and services (sustainability issues included) and spatial ordering into holistic design solutions' and this remains an important area of competency at the school through both design and technology modules.

To date, the school has resisted specifically teaching CAD, with the preference that students develop these skills primarily in year 2 through application within the design studio projects. This is supported by design tutors and presentations at year meetings to provide guidance on the use and application of CAD. We are currently reviewing this, alongside teaching other software packages, as part of a wider UG curriculum review.

3. **Programme Structure:** *Encourage iterative development models and drawings for all schemes as a method of study.*

The school already actively promotes the use of iterative development models and drawings across all years in the school. This has been strengthened in year 1 through the changes made in the AD1 where students are testing ideas and developing skills through a range of mediums. In the DPM1 & 2 modules we have made changes to requiring students to prepare reflective journals on their design processes including sketching, drawing, modelling and digital work.

The role of iterative modelling continues to be encouraged by studio tutors in years 2 and 3 and with the change to a portfolio-based submission we will require evidence of these processes to be included in the portfolio.

4. **Assessment Process:** *Semester 1 studio work in year 3 should be recognised and valued in the final studio module work.*

In respect of the assessment process for semester one in year 3 and its relation to the overall assessment of the year, we are responding by introducing an assessment process at the end of semester one to be trialed in the current academic year 2019/20. As a result, students will receive a mark for their semester one work which will contribute 30% towards the overall mark of the year.

This year we are also introducing a significant change to the assessment of work in year 3 and year 5, in the introduction of a portfolio submission for examination. This change aligns the portfolio assessment process of years 1 and 2 with years 3 and 5. In doing so this change aims to address comments made in respect of the first semester work of units in year 3, in terms of this work being unrecognized in some instances in previous years, whereby this academic year students will present a full portfolio of both semesters work to the examination panel. This change also aims to address issues over the diversity of programmes across units, in terms of particular focus areas in the first / second semesters, such a research, group work etc.

5. **Assessment Process:** *Clarify procedures for resolving disagreements between external reviewers at final student interview assessments.*

The procedures for resolving disagreements in mark between design exam panel assessors are based on Cardiff University's policy for 'Resolving disputes between markers'. In the first instance the panel should agree a single mark, if this is not possible, each panel member should record their individual marks and these marks will be averaged for moderation, with the original separate marks also made available.

6. **Assessment Process:** *Provide students with written feedback on their module for the final interview assessment.*

We agree with this suggestion, and we are introducing formal written feedback on the design examination at the design examinations at the end of 2019/20.

7. **Preparation for the role:** *Provide arrangements and course information for visit slightly earlier, including briefing documents for each unit in year 3.*

It is good to receive positive comments for the diversity of offer in the unit system and in year 3 this has been added to in the academic year 2019/20 with two additional units. Unit briefs for all units will be sent in advance in order that examiners can familiarize themselves with the briefs of each unit prior to examination.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme.

In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Wright', written in a cursive style.

Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar