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Sent by email to rylatt@dmu.ac.uk

06 July 2016

Dear Professor Rylatt,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015– 2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MSc in Environmental Design of Buildings.

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. your report of student concerns regarding training and support for software tools used in the Programme;
2. your concerns regarding the standard of English of some of the student cohort;
3. your report of students not following citation conventions consistently;
4. in the context of your report of many examples of excellent feedback, your indication of some cases where marking and associated feedback was more limited;
5. your report of comments from students on the MSc in Theory and Practice of Sustainable Design signalling duplication of material between two modules.

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The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. In line with practice elsewhere, it is not the intention of the School to provide full software training. Students are directed towards self-learning opportunities and the School will examine how it can strengthen student engagement with these opportunities.
2. The School shares your concerns and is monitoring the situation to inform future decisions on entry standards.
3. Guidance is provided to students on appropriate referencing, citations and the avoidance of plagiarism. The School is considering enhancing its induction activities to emphasise these issues and to highlight possible penalties that may be applied to poorly referenced work.
4. The School was trying to increase the time for students to do their dissertation work and therefore shortened the time for completion of the teaching phase. This had an impact on the time available for markers to provide feedback to students. The program review has agreed that this reduction in time dedicated to the teaching phase did not justify the resulting reduction of time available for markers to provide feedback to students and the School's markers will have longer to provide feedback next year.
5. The School has noted this comment and will take steps to address the matter where appropriate.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your particular commendation of innovative approaches to coursework design with particular reference to practitioner-based activities and of the provision of stimulating extra-curricular activities.

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

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

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 website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar