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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:	Phyllida Mills		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Mills Power Ltd		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Architecture		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017/2018	Date of Report:	15 th August 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.

As one of three external examiners, I have focussed on the Architectural Technology and Architectural Design modules.

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

The programme continues to be structured from year to year to differentiate the years and provide clear progression. Some minor changes have been made in response to our previous comments, which have improved the relationship between years. However, other aspects of the course structure are preventing further improvements and development of the whole cohort of architectural students' creativity and skills to a higher academic standard.

First Year

The first year introduces sensory, experiential and practical projects and provides a rich introduction to architectural design. The pacing of the year has shorter projects in the first semester, and a single long project in the second semester. The short projects and the rolling construction project in the first semester were very successful and enjoyed by students. The Lanzarotte project was based on a strong sense of place and precedent studies of a local architect's work, however the students' final output did not appear to reflect the potential richness of the project.

- Understanding projection and the acquisition of technical and orthographic drawing skills requires reinforcement in order that students can rely on these skills later in the course. It is evident from second and third year students' work that some of these skills have not been reliably acquired in first year. A review of the design principles and methods module, its delivery and integration with the design module is necessary.
- A single project in the second semester is too long, the students are not getting sufficient variety and practice in interpretation of briefs and proposing design approaches. The second semester needs to pose a greater range of design challenges, whether thematic or physical, to extend the students' creativity, introduce them to iterative design processes and thus give them experience and confidence for the more orthodox briefs in the second year.

Second year

The emphasis of the second year design module is more pragmatic with two briefs for a primary school and a housing project. This enables the introduction of a wide variety of the technical aspects of architectural design in the parallel architectural technology module. The vertical studio, gives first and second year students an opportunity to work creatively alongside each other and is highly valued by the students, particularly when involving construction. The second year course needs to more successfully integrate the more exploratory skills developed in first year with its technical teaching. This combination will provide a stronger platform for students across the board to enter third year.

- The housing and school projects are essentially at a similar scale with repeated units. Consideration should be given to a greater variety of scales, by introducing more short design tasks into second year and differentiating the two main projects to introduce 'moderate to high complexity' (programme specification) in the second year design briefs.
- Given the richness of contextual studies in some of the first year work, this appears to be absent in second year work, despite an emphasis on 'contextuality, community and notions of place' in the module description. Clarity from the school on the value of addressing context would help students, and it appears to be an essential skill for tackling the third year briefs.
- The architectural technology module is potentially a strength of the school, but is currently a source of frustration for design staff and students. There will always be tensions between modules that are timetabled in blocks but rely on progress in the design module for applied work. Review of the relationship between the two modules is required to find a best fit between technical input and inspiration and the progress of a student's design or clarity that some technical aspects are studied against precedent schemes or in the abstract. I reiterate my comment of last year that not all aspects of technical design need be covered in every project. These comments apply to technical design in both second and third year.

Third Year

The units offered in third year vary widely in their themes and briefs from small scale interventions to larger city scale sites. Each unit has a different ethos or socially driven motivation. The students appreciate the choice and it enriches the design culture of the school. The award of excellent first class degrees demonstrated this year that it is possible to be very successful with a project that is small scale, large

scale, socially led, or pragmatically lead. This is a sign of success for the school and should be warmly praised.

- At third year, more students could be demonstrating a high level of skill and effectiveness in communicating their ideas and design projects through their presentation of models and drawings on the wall. The viva should not be spent in examiners ironing out errors of projection in orthographic drawings, nor being walked through organisational strategies in order simply to understand the proposal. The more successful students were those whose presentation spoke for itself and the viva addressed the motivations and ideas behind the project including theoretical, social, spatial and technical.

With strong technical teaching at WSA, the opportunity is there for technically imaginative and innovative projects that are convincing and supported by a media rich presentation of drawings and models, virtual, material and at different scales. However, many projects have generic presentations where the design process has clearly not been enriched by and is disengaged from the technological input.

- A strategic decision needs to be made for the architectural technology module on whether the technical submissions for second and third year should be so similar, or whether one year can be comprehensive, when all aspects of the technical course are covered, and the other year can be more specific and relevant to the student's own design project. The 3rd year module description describes a, 'student centred learning approach' that it is difficult to discern in many of the outputs presented for examination, which too often seem like generic work bolted on to the design rather than usefully driving its development. The syllabus content of the second year architectural technology module is a general description, however the syllabus content for the third year is a very prescriptive list. It may be that this is driving a tendency to tick box submissions and assessment in third year.
- The interplay between technological and design modules and the technological marking scheme should be developed in collaboration between the technical and studio staff to recognise when a student has identified the key technical aspects relevant to their own project, and explored and developed these to inform their design decisions to the benefit of their project. Studio staff should be confident students will not be penalised for omission of other aspects of the technical submission that were not relevant to their project. Students need to be encouraged to use their technical skills to imaginatively support and develop their design proposals rather than allow the technical difficulties to smother and even out the design quality. This again requires cooperation between technical and studio tutors.

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

Refer also to comments on academic standards given above, with regards to the course structure.

Standards across the school can be improved, particularly for middle and lower achieving students. The course is growing in numbers and consideration needs to be given to how this increase in cohort can be harnessed to raise all students' experience and attainment.

- The school needs to look at how standards can be raised across the third year, so that more students produce good and comprehensive level work. This will depend on aspirations and standards being raised across the degree in all years. The quality of design projects and presentations pinned up and in portfolios lacked confidence and flair in many cases, not usually because a design approach or ideas were lacking, but because the design was not sufficiently developed, followed through or skilfully enough presented to represent its potential.
- It was noticeable, that in studios where urban place making is very successful or where a social agenda is addressed, but with a less resolved building, examiners found it difficult to award a high design module mark, whereas other projects that had well resolved buildings without context or sophisticated place making were rewarded more easily. The school needs to be vigilant about this and assert that different studios can have different outputs that still meet the assessment criteria. Or the school should be clear with unit leaders that a resolved building is a prerequisite.
- All units should ensure that both semester's work is represented for assessment at the final pin up.

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 by a combination of external and internal examiners, with moderation by the internal group seems to work well.

The role of the external examiner provides a necessary overview of the course and standards. This year attendance was arranged over three days plus the exam board on a fourth day. This is an unreasonable time demand against the University's standard fee of £561.00.

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

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Leadership in the school

The school should review its leadership structure to include a wider group of staff in decision making, or at the very least to garner input from a wider group. There is currently a sense that for instance studio tutors who deliver the largest module in third year, architectural design, are isolated from each other and from the school.

The school should review its recruitment strategy. The lack of women staff in leadership roles (present at the exam board for instance) and the very small number of women staff present during the examination process was shocking. This appears to include lack of women in roles examining, assessing, leading year groups, leading third year units, in school leadership roles and attending and chairing meetings. The school should ensure that students are being assessed by female staff as well as male and should take steps to ensure that they are interviewing strong female as well as strong male candidates for all appointments.

The two issues of lack of women in leadership roles and the need to review the leadership structure are likely to be connected.

As mentioned above, despite some excellent teaching, studio tutors feel isolated and do not have a sense of the whole course, not even those modules such as the design principles and methods and technological modules which have a very direct bearing and potential benefit to the design module. It appears necessary to address studio tutor contracts to give them enough time and remuneration to be more involved in the school to its and its students' benefit.

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)

Feedback from the students values the variety year to year across the course and the balance of strong technical and strong creative content. There is some frustration with the pacing of the different modules, with unbalanced workloads and clashing deadlines at times between the design principles and methods, technical design and architectural design modules.

As the school grows, there will be the opportunity to enhance learning opportunities by developing more specialist courses, either as separate degree courses or as electives. One opportunity already exists in moving parametric design out of the design principles and methods module into an elective course, possibly in collaboration with the University's School of computer science. This would both improve the quality of the teaching of this subject, and release those not interested in parametric analysis and modelling.

The variety and quality of the third year briefs and support given to the students by some very stretched studio teaching staff created the opportunity for some excellent portfolios. With more tuning of the course to support the third year tutors, the quality of the whole year's portfolios could follow suit and be raised.

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

N/A

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?		N	
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		N	
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?		N	
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?		N	
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?			N/A
Sampling of work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
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 established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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?			N/A
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

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