

Academic & Student Support Services  
Academic Registrar  
Simon Wright LLB  
*Gwasanaethau Academaidd a Chefnogi Myfyrwyr*  
*Cofrestrydd Academaidd*  
*Simon Wright LLB*



**Sent by email to [takero@t-sa.co.uk](mailto:takero@t-sa.co.uk)**

**25 November 2015**

Dear Mr Shimazaki,

**Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015**

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BSc in Architectural Studies.

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 observation that some of the supportive courses seemed less clear in its set up and requirements and related comments;
2. Your related comment that regarding other complimentary study such as the DPM, where too much attention is paid to the parametric method of computer studies. Considering the number of design projects that were not based on such methodology, this also seemed slightly out of sync with the rest of the course.
3. Your detailed observations regarding plans and spatial understanding where it is sometimes difficult to ascertain as the sections and the plans do not seem to match or work together. There seemed to be less models than previous years and your suggestion that learning how to do fewer plans and sections but in better quality and analysis might benefit the course and the students' learning outcome.
4. Your detailed observations on the clarity and purpose of presentations;
5. Your indication that students face problems if the design unit brief is not rigorously detailed and set up and related detailed observations;

Cardiff University  
McKenzie House  
30-36 Newport Road  
Cardiff CF24 ODE  
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

*Prifysgol Caerdydd*  
*Tŷ McKenzie*  
*30-36 Heol Casnewydd*  
*Caerdydd CF24 ODE*  
Tel Ffôn I +44(0)29 2087 9189  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

6. Your detailed comments on the marking of different design emphases of the units;
7. Your suggestion that a very well disciplined brief and structure to Unit programmes would help the students to be thorough, technically assuring as well as being creative.

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

1. This year the interface between the design module and technology module has been substantially reviewed, and the balance between different components of the technology curriculum have been readjusted. Structure, construction, building science and environmental performance are represented more equitably in the syllabus. Furthermore the mode of delivery has changed. In the first term students will undertake an in depth analytic investigation of technical aspects and their application to exemplary architecture. This student research phase is supported by a series of lectures and workshops where students are familiarised with the underlying concepts, principles and theories. In the second term students will apply their technical knowledge into their own studio design work. This application phase is supported by small group seminar expert classes where relevant technical issues of specific studio briefs are discussed and explored in more detail.
2. The School intends to retain the module in this format for this session. Whilst parametric design is still relatively under-explored as a design method in design studios at the WSA, the School views the DPM module as an opportunity for students to gain expertise within an area relevant to contemporary architectural practice that will be encountered after graduation.
3. & 4. The School agrees comments that clarity in orthographic drawing and the integration of technical understanding into design proposals are fundamental skills which need further development. Teaching these skills is a constant challenge and the School intends to support students in developing clarity and discretion in their use of drawing, annotation etc. through a series of workshops delivered in term 2 to year 3 students. The changes wrought in the delivery of technical teaching (see above) will, it is believed, help considerably in the integration of technical thinking into the students architectural design proposals.

The School also agrees that acquiring skill in meaningful and accurate graphic representation must start in year 1 and 2 and will continue to work with these years on issues of graphic intelligibility, both in communicating with others; developing and reflecting on the students' own work. The School does, however, wish to celebrate diversity and do not intend to institute a school 'style'.

At year 3 level there is diversity amongst the units regarding the emphasis placed on different forms of representation. Some still use many models, others focus more on drawing.

5. This Session an outline timetable has been introduced in order to set limits to the master-planning and brief formation phases of the various projects. This includes structured deadlines for the master-planning and brief formation phases, and thus facilitates the process of guiding students towards formulating an appropriately defined and constrained design challenge for the final phase of their project work. Since different units place different emphases on different scales of design, there will be some variety between units, but the dangers inherent in allowing unduly extended research and master-planning phases has been discussed with the unit leaders, and this strategy developed in collaboration with them.

The School is aware of the particular problems faced by the weaker students in allowing too much freedom of scope and believe that these measures will address this issue. This year The School is are supporting students' work in master planning with introductory lectures on urban theory.

6. The School believes that marking does reflect the different weighting given to different design emphases of the units, but will continue to monitor this and to explain the process to critics and examiners at every opportunity.
7. The School acknowledges that a more structured written briefing from some of the visiting unit leaders will help the students and has put in place measures to assist these tutors in producing appropriate documentation."

**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 "interesting and diverse" briefs and of the selection of design units available to students;
3. Your report of student satisfaction and confirmation of the value students place on the 'hands on' teaching provided by the School.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we 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 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

Cardiff University  
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detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar