

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

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	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:	2018/19	Date of Report:	1 st August 2019

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the dissertation 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 General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

The content of the programme at the Welsh School does not explicitly include sustainability. The school needs to urgently take a position on energy use and embed throughout the existing course, a thorough understanding of the impact of architecture and construction on the planet's climate and resources, the natural world and on peoples' lives.

Throughout the school, there is a range of very good studio and unit briefs offering a wide variety of exciting potential projects for the students that lead them in a structured way through projects of increasing complexity and diversity. There have been some commendable developments in the structure of the history module to develop students' thinking and critical skills. The change in structure to offer a choice of topics in the Design Principles and Methods module and changes to the technical teaching in second year were also successful.

The school is not yet meeting the expectations of students in third year with regard to technology teaching. Students have an expectation that technology should be integrated with the design unit, however, this is not matched by design studio tutors, who do not set deliverables for technology and have no input into the students' engagement with technology teaching. Delivery of teaching by fixed blocks of

lectures and seminars seems to make it difficult to time input to coordinate with the looser structure of the design units, which go at different paces from each other, as well as students themselves naturally progressing at different rates. Access to tutorials at appropriate times to coincide with and enhance the development of a student's design project does not seem to be equally available to all. Requirements were inconsistent, with some students covering 6 topics and others being advised to cover 3 topics. Addressing this structural problem with the course will require transparency about what is and is not possible to coordinate, clarity on expectations for integration of technology with proposed design, and, as has been suggested in previous years' commentary, a consistency of whether all topics are to be covered, or a selection of those most relevant to the student's own project. The process of achieving this transparency and clarity should include both design tutors and technical tutors.

The school should consider where there are opportunities to build in more group work to the modules, so that students get experience in cooperation and negotiation.

A number of the third year units' briefs address large sites for regeneration or housing, or whole urban areas, sometimes described as 'master planning' units. These students are generally (though not always) tackling large sites with large scale buildings. Unit or year based teaching could be designed to give a more structured understanding of how a master plan for a site/city/area/landscape showing plots, infrastructure, services, context, landscape and environment is distinct from a design proposal that fills out part of that master plan. This would help to develop confidence in graphic presentation of master plans individually or through group work, and boost representation in examination of the first semester's work.

Visibility of design work between studios, years, degree and masters courses is constrained. Students find it difficult to see each other's work. They are encouraged to stay within unit crits rather than travel around the building on crit days. The school should seek opportunities for peer to peer learning throughout the school.

The quality of first year work appears to have fallen well short of previous years, despite the structure and content of the course remaining largely the same. This was acknowledged and the year and course leadership need to understand why and how this has happened.

The students feel that the school is not entirely supportive of their need for facilities and skills. Studios closed 3 weeks before hand in, access to the model shop is generally OK, but printers and plotters do not always work, materials are expensive. A basic introduction to core digital skills such as Revit, Sketchup and Rhino, early in the course, would be appreciated.

There are still opportunities to improve integration between modules. The students still have the sense that the unit tutors are not aware what is being taught on other modules, nor what resources and facilities are available within the school, meaning that opportunities to enrich and reinforce learning are being missed. This should be an outcome of the improved contact between staff and unit tutors now taking place.

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

The school delivers a course that is good or excellent in some parts and good or excellent in some years. It has the potential to be good or excellent across the board and should now begin to focus on strength in depth. How can it achieve a consistently high level of course content, structure, relevance, teaching and integration across all its modules? Improving the clarity and delivery of the course will allow students to improve their attainment, particularly those achieving middle range grades.

The absence in portfolios of evidence of awareness of and weighing sustainability and climate change issues means the course will very soon find itself out of step with society as well as the profession.

The quality and scope of content in the first year portfolios presented was well below that achieved in previous years. Some analysis is necessary to understand whether leadership, constraints, structure, the increased cohort or other factors are the cause. These students may need extra support in the subsequent years which count towards their degree.

Newly set up units generally do not appear to have the clarity of method and focus that the longer running studios have generally achieved. This may have an impact on a student's attainment, particularly those in the middle spectrum. The school should quantify this to check whether this effect does exist, and look at how new studios can be supported if necessary.

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

Broadly the assessment and moderation process works well for the design module, with both internal and external assessors referring to the mark scheme. Where there were disagreements about standards and levelling, these were well handled through the moderation process.

In third year, students feel they do not have a clear understanding of the criteria for marking a very well developed small site in comparison to a less well developed complex site. More transparency about how units can be so different and yet map onto a single set of module criteria, would benefit both students and staff. Feedback on attainment level during the course was not consistent across all third year units.

Levelling of standards across the design units requires care and a mutual understanding that students can demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes that meet the module description with work that is different in scope between units. As mentioned in previous years, the school needs to continue to underline that the differences between units are welcomed and an aspect of the school's strength. A structured process should be implemented on multiple fronts, to build confidence in this particular strength, with staff, examiners and students. In parallel it might be appropriate to review how a research based design unit, where the balance of research and design might be 80/20, can follow the same assessment process as a unit where research and design is 20/80. It might be necessary to be explicit in the unit outcomes, for example, that the research (as well as the design) must be powerfully and graphically presented on the wall for examination, legible from a metre away.

Unit specific learning outcomes were not systematically expressed nor consistently mapped to the module descriptions across the third year unit briefs; some had specific outputs, some more general and others not issued with the brief. The degree leadership team should review how this can be improved, and whether there should be some learning outcomes that are common to all units, others specific to the type/scope of the unit and others perhaps particular to the specific unit. Leaving description of learning outcomes to 10 or more unit tutors may not be the answer to achieving the desired balance of quality, consistency and variety.

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

[Where possible please complete this section following the dissertation examining board determining the final award.]

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Good progress on recruitment of women to teaching posts and to the examination process has been made. The school has now set a path, and must stay vigilant to maintain it. Relying on externally invited women is not sufficient to fully transform the staff and outlook of the school. The school needs to continue focus on making significant annual progress to a 50-50 female-male split across all roles in the school, whether permanent, temporary, visiting, leadership, lecturer, researcher, tutor, administrative, professor, critic, internal or external.

Leadership has improved and there is more sense of esprit de corps among staff across the school. This needs continued work, particularly to include those staff that are part time, specialist or for instance have recently joined to run one of the new third year units. There are many staff who teach at or have taught at other institutions in the UK and abroad, as well as those with long experience at the WSA. This is a valuable resource for input and feedback on how to continue to improve the structure and content of the course. It is also a bank of knowledge to be tapped in devising methods for experimentation with alternative teaching methods or deep dives into specialist areas to enrich learning within a module or in setting up new elective modules.

First Year

As discussed above, the first year course has taken a step back. My comments in previous years welcomed the combination of sensory, experiential and practical projects that provided a rich introduction to architectural design and suggested how the course might be fine tuned. The lack of ambition and skill evident in the work in portfolios presented by this year's cohort will have an impact on the students' ability to attain well in subsequent years. I have previously commented extensively on the first year course, and these comments should be referred to in order to regain some ground.

Second year

The second year has been the subject of some focus and in this current year has been very successful. The portfolios show a good variety of scale and engagement,

and display a wide variety of skills from exploratory to technical. The school has responded thoughtfully to previous comments and made improvements to distinguish and enrich the complexity of briefs. The technical lighting study allowed students to creatively explore an aspect of the technical module in the context of their proposals for the design module. It would be great to see more equivalent methods for explicitly embedding technical understanding in design thinking, perhaps using precedent study projects, the 'short projects' or the vertical studios as well as design projects.

Third Year

The breadth and depth of the unit briefs continues to produce strong work across the year. The issue of not presenting both semesters' work for portfolio review continues to impede attainment, particularly in studios that rely on extensive analysis or research at scale. The consistency of orthographic drawing has improved across the work pinned up, whether this is a function of the cohort or of improved teaching in previous years, it now needs to set a benchmark for future portfolios. There is an enjoyably wide variety of graphic styles and techniques, but as mentioned above, more exploration is needed in how to confidently draw and graphically present research and analysis. Evidence of the desired cooperation between technical and studio tutors is not yet apparent in the third year vivas and portfolios.

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)

No comments.

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?		-	
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?		-	
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?		N	
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with		-	

	established procedures and to your satisfaction?			
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	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?		-	
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?		-	

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
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Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

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