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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	David Short		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Nottingham		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc Architectural Studies		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2018/19	Date of Report:	02/07/2019

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)

Overall the BSc programme is well structured.

The year 3 Professional Studies module is well constructed and this year has been reworked a little to explore key topic areas through a case study. This adds to the student's appreciation of a building project from a different set of criteria. With a mixture of group and individual work the module is well set to help students prepare for their year in industry.

Both year 2 and year 3 humanities' modules are also now well set and appeared to be more focussed around subject areas and case studies that allow the student to critique a building from a set of themes or values that in turn can be transferred across usefully into their design studio module. Both are encouraging students to work more critically in how they consider things.

Year 2 studio module has now consolidated its previous strengths and is well structured and takes the student through an appropriate level and now range of projects that develop through the year. There was a good body of work evident and the marking standard was appropriate. The summer primer project between years 1 and 2 also seems to be working well.

Year 1 studio project work however was a problem. Some previous external examiners' comments perhaps may have been misinterpreted. This could have been affected by a

member of staff leaving. Three design projects had been set through the year and correctly each was of a different scale and required different outcomes. However there did not appear to be much progression in students' skills through the year. Previously there had been in semester 1 some freer more skill developing exercises centred on drawing and making of some conceptual maquettes out of real materials before moving on to a design project in Semester 2. The issue here was the nature of the design project and its lack of complexity and testing of skills.

This year I felt that the marking was too high as declared by the sample of portfolios viewed. The school however reviewed its marking of this module against its learning outcomes and confirmed that these were in alignment. I am happy to accept that this was therefore satisfactory. However the school must ensure that at the end of year 1 its students are prepared for year 2 and at the standard that it would wish to see. Perhaps this should be the starting point against which to work backwards from, knowing then what you are trying to achieve with each main design project in year 1 and its learning outcomes. These main design projects could have set within them or interspersed between them some additional skill building exercises to help move the students on.

I have some concerns over the technical report produced by each student at year 3 level. Cardiff has a strong reputation for competency in the technical work produced by their students. However I wonder at this stage whether the requirements should reflect the nature of the individual projects a little more. There may be some core areas of understanding that have to be proved by the work of all students but could there be more of a focus by each student of a technical/performance aspect that is more relevant to their chosen building type.

Students also would like more support with their technical work of their final projects. Does the school have a policy on teaching CAD at undergraduate level as it appears that this is now largely self-taught?

It is important that the process and developmental work is also valued and shown in the final work. This would undoubtedly help the student and reviewers alike. Iterative development models and drawings for all schemes should be encouraged as a method of study.

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

Generally the academic standards are appropriate although Cardiff as one of the top schools of architecture in the UK could still be pushing itself further to enable a higher percentage of students to achieve good degrees.

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

It is clear that within the unit system there will always be different ways of working and different priorities. It is important that, in some way, in particular the Semester 1 studio work in year 3 is recognised and valued in the final studio module mark. In some units this part of the work appears to be ignored in the final assessment at the moment. Group and individual components should be acknowledged. This would also have the added benefit of reducing the pressure when awarding the large credit bearing mark at the final interview and assessment point which although this has been an established practice must put enormous pressure on the students and also assessing staff. The dynamic of the panel for these short sessions becomes important and can have a large bearing on the student's mark awarded at this stage.

Unfortunately this year at the end of one student's interview, the external reviewers could not agree a mark as required and this resulted in an argument that ran into the allotted time of the next interview at which point it becomes unprofessional. In these situations it must be made clear what the procedures are and these must be followed.

The end interview point is also a question and answer session. To have added value could written feedback on their module be given to each student? Perhaps it already is and we did not see this part of the process.

It was evident that the students also feel that they have little knowledge about how they are doing coming into the final assessment point of this end of year 20 minute interview.

The marking moderation process happens on the second day and was led by independent reviewers from the previous day. This is a rigorous process ensuring that marking standards at final year level are appropriate and fair across the cohort.

**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](#).]

I have been impressed at the positive responses to previous comments made. This year in particular there did seem to be a much better relationship between taught lecture modules and studio project work.

Year 2 studio projects also have been refined to provide a greater variation in the requirements of the briefs offered through the year.

**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)

Again if the information about the days and course content could be sent out slightly earlier it would be helpful in planning the visit.

The general arrangements this year for the external examiners were much better. The schedule had been reordered to enable examiners to consider the final year 3 studio project work properly before then being able to focus on the taught lecture modules and year 1 & year 2 portfolio samples. It also allowed all units to be reviewed over the one day.

It would also have been useful to have been able to familiarise myself with the different briefing documents for each unit in year 3 ahead of the visit.

**7. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement** (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

The variety of studio units on offer in both year 2 & 3 is commendable.

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.

**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)
<b>Programme/Course information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	*	*	
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		*	
<b>Commenting on draft examination question papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	*		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	*		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	*		
<b>Examination scripts</b>				
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?	*		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	*		
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	*		
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	*		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	*		
<b>Coursework and practical assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	*	*	
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	*		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	*		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	*	*	
<b>Clinical examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
<b>Sampling of work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	*		
<b>Examining board meeting</b>				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	*		

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?	*		
<b>Joint examining board meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		*	
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?			

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[externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk)

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