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Sent by email to s.natarajan@bath.ac.uk

03 December 2020

Dear Dr Natarajan,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2019/20

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's report for the MArch.

Your report does not appear to raise any significant issues that require a more detailed response, however the School have been asked to note the following comments:

1. Consider the impact of historical effects, as well as the impact of the current crisis, on degree classifications.
2. Consider whether the dissertation grading scheme needs alteration to balance challenging dissertation topics against more methodologically straightforward topics.
3. Make conference presentation mandatory and possibly expose earlier years to the conference.
4. Explore means of improving inter-unit interaction in the design thesis.
5. Ensure student experience is protected through continued interaction with industry and practice.

I am confident that the Programme Team will endeavour to address the issues identified in your report and your comments will help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process.

Degree Outcomes

Whilst you have not raised this as a significant concern in your report, the Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee has asked the School to review their degree outcomes profile as there has been a significant rise in first class honours degrees during 2019/20 compared with other years.



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The School will be required to look at this in detail to try and understand any underlying factors that may have contributed to this both positive and negative. I am sure you will agree that it is important we ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained with reference to external expectations in line with our responsibility to publish a Degree Outcomes Statement as specified by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) Statement of Intent to protect the value of UK degrees.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments, including:

1. Your positive comments regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. Confirmation that the actions taken as a result of the variation of assessments in relation to industrial action and Covid-19 have been appropriate to protect the academic standards of the programme and have allowed students to achieve their programme level learning outcomes.
3. The programme lead and tutors should be congratulated for their outstanding effort in challenging students intellectually whilst providing great programmatic clarity.
4. The use of the full marking scale is noteworthy and should be continued.
5. It is clear that suggestions for improvements to the process from previous years, such as providing a clear pathway for different types of research methods via the handbook, have been implemented successfully.
6. The introduction of the dissertation conference is an excellent idea, and should be continued, ideally as a mandatory activity for all students.
7. The opportunity to now view the whole programme, as opposed to only the dissertation, is welcome and provides greater clarity on the student and programme profile than previously.
8. Students are given an excellent framework for conducting their design and research work, whilst allowing considerable space for individual exploration and freedom.

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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar