



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof R Mark Rylatt		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	De Montfort University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MSc Environmental Design of Buildings		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015/2016	Date of Report:	23/05/2016

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

### 1. Programme Structure

This MSc is based on a number of core modules shared with other Masters courses and three specific modules that differentiate the course sufficiently to give it identity and enable deeper understanding of the principles and methodologies of environmental design in architecture and the building industry. The structure adequately supports the advanced learning needs of both architects and engineers wishing to improve their academic profile in this area. It succeeds in presenting the necessary foundational and more specialised material in configurations that are well planned to sustain interest without duplication between core and specialised modules\* and to strongly facilitate achievement of learning outcomes. However the issue of training and support for software tools used on the course was raised during a meeting with the students; a straw poll indicated a quite strong belief that inadequate delivery in this area had significantly but not seriously affected individual performance on the course.

### 2. Academic Standards

There is no reason to believe that the academic standards set for the course compare unfavourable with similar Masters' level courses in the UK. Given the diverse cohorts for a multidisciplinary course, necessary grounding is provided in industry standard approaches and tools applicable in a variety of building design contexts and this forms the basis for more advanced work with learning outcomes that prepare the students for research in building and architectural science and for work as cutting edge practitioners. There is strong evidence that students can learn to interpret and apply advanced

knowledge systematically in a variety of complex situations. The course team clearly encourages the development of solutions through initiative, self-direction, critical evaluation and team work. However the level of attainment on the course is perhaps slightly disappointing, which may be attributed to the limited ambitions of students typically attracted to the course and in particular the standard of English, which is clearly a cause for concern to the course team. There were examples of work that needed repeated reading to determine with confidence whether learning outcomes had been achieved. It was also noted that a significant number of students did not appear to follow citation conventions consistently or to understand the importance of appropriate structure in essays and reports.

### **3. The Assessment Process**

There was strong evidence that the course sets out clear information and guidelines in the form of assignment briefs and marking schemes designed to support achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level. Stratified samples of student work from all modules were examined in order to consider the standard of assessment in terms of consistency and fairness. Bearing in mind that it is not part of the external examination role to request remarking in other than extreme cases, some indications of inconsistency in the marking were noted, in particular where the importance of properly structured argument and referencing at this level did not seem to carry sufficient weight. Additionally, as noted in Section 1, poor student English sometimes made it difficult to judge the objectivity of the assessment. There were many examples of excellent feedback where very detailed explanations were given of why marks were lost and how more could have been gained. On other hand there were also a significant number of examples where feedback was less helpful, and did not fully explain why a given marking band was appropriate, e.g. Grade: "Good", Comment: "Good amount of knowledge..."; Grade "Fair", Comment: "Fair amount of knowledge...". However, there may have been extenuating circumstances attributable to the exam board having been brought forward to allow more time for dissertations, resulting in challenging time constraints on some of the marking – if so this will need to be addressed in future years.

### **4. Year-on-Year Comments**

There was no evidence to suggest that academic standards and attainment were significantly different to previous years, with the exception of the quality written English noted above. In this regard teaching staff seemed to think that the IELTS requirement had been lowered but I could find no evidence of this. Last year there was considerable student dissatisfaction with the physical learning environment but this was not mentioned at my meeting with students this time – however it seems that much of the teaching was done outside Bute this year. Some minor changes to the course structure have significantly reduced the assessment overhead, which had previously been noted as bordering on excessive, although as noted in Section 3 the change in scheduling of the exam board may have diluted this improvement. There have been some changes to the course team but this has not resulted in any significant deterioration in standards.

## **5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)**

## **6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement**

Once again it was notable that the course team are strongly committed to enhancing the learning experience through innovative approaches to coursework design with particular relevance to practitioner based activities and the provision of stimulating extra-curricular activities.

## **7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)**

N/A

**\*NB.** I have been requested by the students on the Theory and Practice of Sustainable Design course to mention that there is in fact very significant duplication of material between the specialised module Building Procurement and Performance and a core module, presumably Investigation of the Built Environment.

## 8. 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>				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	N		
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			
8.10	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>				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	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		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

[ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk](mailto:ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk)

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,  
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE