



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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|---|---|-----------------|------------|
| | For completion by External Examiner: | | |
| Name of External Examiner: | Joanna van Heyningen | | |
| Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner: | Van Heyningen & Haward Architects | | |
| Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report: | BSc Architecture <i>(BSc in Architectural Studies)</i> | | |
| Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report: | 2015-16 | Date of Report: | 14.06.2016 |

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

The BSc is well organised, Most of my comments are under Academic Standards, below.

2. Academic Standards

Solid. Good, as last year. But the longer you know a school, the more ambitious you get for it.

I would particularly like to see a greater awareness in the students' work of context:

1. in terms of the students' drawings. It was the norm this year for the context of a project either not to be drawn, or to be drawn as outlines or so faint that again it lacked substance. This makes one suspect that it has been unimportant to the student.
2. In terms of the inappropriateness (irrespective of style) of many of the students' projects to their physical context, either in the brief they had written for themselves, or in the built form.

On reflection, although each unit offered something different, the results at the end of the year did not always reflect that. Some units offered four different sites, with the result that there were only, say, two students for each site, each with a different programme. Perhaps this dilutes the power of teaching that any unit leader can give.

It would be worth looking into having fewer units, with more students in each. A cue could be taken from the way the second year is organised (and indeed the third year in many other schools of architecture), where each unit is lead by a pair of teachers working together, complimenting each other's skills and interests, and demonstrating to the students the value of the dialogue between them. This might encourage a more palpable difference between units. There could still be room for a unit/units taught with only one unit leader.

I was pleased to see that the students were no longer relying on photo-shop to give character to their drawings. There were examples of excellent drawings. As before, the students seem reluctant to show diagrams of the concept behind their projects, and I urge the school to work very hard on this, as a skill to take forward into their working lives.

As last year, I was frustrated by students' relying on verbal explanations of what their drawings were intended to convey. It is more important for a drawing to be legible than it is for it to be beautiful (though both can be achieved). Drawings should describe living breathing buildings.

I was impressed by examples I saw of an exercise which required students to analyse an existing building by a prominent architect in terms of its technical performance. I also saw examples of some good technical studies of students' own projects, but, as so often happens, this technical exercise was not always evident in the finished project.

I had a 90-minute meeting with good proportion of the students, at least 2 from each unit, on the third day. They were enthusiastic about the school and the teaching they had received, and there was an absence of last year's complaint about not enough teaching. They were most enthusiastic about the unit which had the most helpful structure (and perhaps the most inspiring leader) and least about one which they thought had a confused structure for the whole year. There was no complaint about too much masterplanning, as there was last year. There was complaint about technical teaching.

3. The Assessment Process

- Viva timetabling worked better this year, each student being allocated 10 minutes to present their work; this was adhered to, and the discipline was helpful to the students.
- The staff at Cardiff had worked scrupulously in their internal marking of the BSc. It was a great improvement from last year that only provisional marks had been allocated a month before the viva, which had two results:
 1. In some cases a great deal of work had taken place in that month (mostly without the benefit of further tuition from the unit leader)
 2. Discussion of the marking of each student was informed, but not constrained as in previous years, by the earlier provisional mark.
- In some cases there were striking differences (up or down) between the provisional and the post-viva marks, and these were discussed fully between the external examiners and the internal staff.

- The Internal panel consisted this year of a panel chair, a lead examiner, and the unit leader. This worked well, particularly when there was dialogue between all three, rather than single questioning by the lead examiner.
- However, what did not work well was the exclusion of the External Examiner from this. Although it is clearly understood that the External Examiner is *not permitted to give feedback or advice to students*, it is a real problem that he or she cannot take part of the questioning of the student, alongside the internal examiners.
- This restriction greatly decreased the value of this annual opportunity for the students to meet respected professionals from outside the school as the final moment at the end of their BSc course.
- It also represented an opportunity missed by the Welsh School of Architecture for the annual immersion in self-questioning and examination that two or three days spent with three constructive external examiners can bring, with their passion and excitement for practice and teaching.
- And it is frustrating and boring for the External Examiner.
- We were pleased to have two opportunities to meet the unit leaders at the right time, namely after seeing their units' work. The external examiners were able to pass on comments, and a useful discussion was had. Afterwards, we thought it would have been even more useful if the Year Chair or the Scheme Convenor had been there. So I'm hoping for that further improvement next year.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

It seemed to me that the first and second year work was appropriate, and that it prepared its students for the BSc properly. I was struck by the lessons I thought could be learned for Year 3 from Year 2, as discussed above.

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

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

No comments so far.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

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) |
|--|---|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Programme/Course Information | | | | |
| 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? | Y | | |
| Draft Examination Question Papers | | | | |
| 8.3 | Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award? | | N | |
| 8.4 | Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate? | Y | | |
| 8.5 | Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments? | Y | | |
| Marking Examination Scripts | | | | |
| 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? | Y | | |
| 8.7 | Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate? | Y | | |
| 8.8 | Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks? | Y | | |
| 8.9 | Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners? | Y | | |
| 8.10 | 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 | | | | |
| 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 | | |
| Clinical Examinations (if applicable) | | | | |
| 8.15 | Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments? | | | |
| Sampling of Work | | | | |
| 8.16 | Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work? | Y | | |
| Examining Board Meeting | | | | |

| | | 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 | | |
| Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable) | | | | |
| 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

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