



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Dr. Tania Sengupta		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	M. Arch Dissertations		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-18	Date of Report:	26.04.2018

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

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 Data Protection Act (1998).

Section 1: Annual Report Checklist

If you respond 'No' to any of the questions below, please can you provide more detailed comments in Section 2 below.

	Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information			
Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers			
Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts			
Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and	Y		

consistent?			
Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
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			
Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)			
Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work			
Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting			
Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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)			
Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)			
Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?	Y		
Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?	Y		
Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?	Y		

If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	Y		
Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?	Y		
Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?	Y		

Section 2: Detailed comments on the programme/modules

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

The programme structure seems fine as such, especially the fact that the research methods component of the dissertation in effect starts the year before, which gives the students a good year to do in-depth research. In terms of the actual output itself, I have noticed what to my mind is a very good move away from the somewhat prescriptive structure/ format of the dissertation that was there earlier on. I have seen this shift take place over the past couple of years in the module guidelines but this time the results seemed to be actually legible in some of the dissertations, which was great to see. This, in my opinion has yielded a larger range of more interesting and innovative dissertations and is a very positive development. The programme structure would benefit from the introduction of a few points of interaction that are more collegial, collaborative and peer-learning based – both for students and staff - rather than being the lone journey of a single student with her/ his supervisor. These could take e.g. the form of an interim stage presentation by each student as part of a small review along with a few other students. Two tutors' tutee groups could be combined, for instance, so that the students get the opinion/ input of another tutor (plus their peers) along the way and research can happen in an atmosphere of conversation. This'll also give it a more social and collaborative learning feel. It would also help the tutors' (especially early career teaching staff) own learning from each other and collegial intellectual exchange. It may be useful to think about the idea of a minimum word count (e.g. 6000, maximum already specified as 10,000) in order to avoid work that is inadequate for submission (further details below).

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

The academic standards seem quite good on the whole and the overall level of the work would generally match up with good schools of architecture in the UK. There were some wonderful, very deeply researched and nuanced work at the top level, which utilised rigorous empirical study along with complex argumentation. There were very few students whose work did not pass, one of which was because it lacked the bare minimum amount work that a dissertation would require. Here, a minimum word count might help, although there is obviously no guarantee that that would ensure the desirable minimum amount of actual research. In some cases, it was felt that the mapping of the students' topics to the supervisors' expertise could be improved (although it generally worked quite well) as that can make all the difference in the student's experience and the actual outcome.

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

A very positive development in the assessment process has been the setting up of a good internal moderation process through a moderation committee, especially, among others, to review essays with large difference of marks between first and second markers. There were a couple of instances where the external examiners felt that work using very original formulation or very complex and nuanced argument had not been rewarded adequately. Attention needs to be paid to making sure that the right things are valued, therefore.

Especially in case of disputes between large marks-difference between assessors, it would be good to see if the moderation panel assessor can ideally be someone who is a subject-expert (to the extent realistically possible) and also to pay particular attention to such aspects (originality, research-rigour, complexity/ nuance of argument). It may be also be good if e.g. the module coordinator could read a sample across the vertical scale in order to have an overview of the work across the module, even if this is not a very large number.

Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (sample received, the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners, how the schemes for marking and classification were applied).

I was happy with the sample I received, which covered the full spectrum of marks and a range of themes. On the whole, the dissertations seem quite rigorous in terms of actual empirical research. In particular, the students tend to do fairly detailed architectural readings of buildings and are adept at describing their experiential qualities very well – i.e. quite a nice phenomenological approach. These are attributes that should be encouraged. I did feel however, that more can be done in terms of the works' critical positioning within a larger field, and raising more informed, critical questions around social, political, cultural, ecological or ethical issues. Innovative topic and research question formulation are obviously key to this, and perhaps informal a workshop using trial and error iterations – drawing from some of the actual topics being attempted by the students, without students feeling the pressure to arrive at the final topic or questions but rather to think speculatively in a more relaxed manner, trying out different options - could really help here in developing these skills.

Also, in the previous years I had seen a bit more of work based in non-western contexts (less so this year). I would encourage more work (other than what is already being done) on non-western or other lesser-known contexts, less iconic buildings, architects and places, and possibly architectures of everyday life. The slight loosening up of the dissertation format has helped, in my opinion - e.g. some students, instead of a section at the beginning called 'literature review', this time wove in relevant ideas and literature along the way as the discussion developed, in a far more innovative and interesting manner. Another student first introduced his site in great detail through a phenomenological approach, drew out key conceptual aspects in the next chapter and then introduced relevant literature further down the line where it seemed to be far more useful and interesting. The marking system works reasonably well now, especially the move towards more robust internal moderation is great, since there are often large variations between the marks of internal examiners (see more details in the 'Assessment' section).

Year-on-Year Comments

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

Introduction of internal moderation panel is a good move in the right direction. So is the slight loosening up of the format of the dissertation, while not making it totally open ended (especially for the weaker students who it could help to work to a structure). More originality of research questions and socially, politically critical approach in the dissertations would be something to pursue further. Informal group workshops e.g. to heuristically formulate 'research questions' or articulating the larger field in the context of students' actual topics could be thought of to address some of these issues. The school's particular strength seems to be that of good, rigorous empirical research. In many schools of architecture today, this 'research depth' is increasingly seen lesser and lesser. To my mind, therefore, this should be preserved and not compromised within the pursuit of criticality. But a combination of robust empirics along with a critical approach could be truly wonderful!

Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

This was my third year of examining dissertations. My initial briefing in the first year was very good, and in all the years I have got adequate information about the dissertation module in relation to the broader context of the programme. I was informed this year of all the changes that had been undertaken on various fronts and as such felt well equipped to be able to evaluate the module in relation to the programme.

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

(Refer to points mentioned under all the earlier headings). Research rigour, ability to read buildings quite thoroughly, especially in experiential terms, are the strengths of the module and the work that comes out of the school. These are very valuable and need to be preserved and enhanced. Originality, criticality and more social and collaborative learning are aspects that could help improve the experience and outputs further. The chain of assessment - supervisor and second marker, marks agreement, moderation panel if needed and a viva with each student - is commendable. All the points mentioned in this report are advisory and only for further improvement. They can be taken up to the extent realistically possible within the particular potentials and constraints of the school, especially since the dissertation programme already delivers a good, robust body of research work done to a good standard.

Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

N/A

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

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

External Examiners, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE