

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

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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 Architecture		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2019/20	Date of Report:	21/08/2020

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

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)

Over the period of my role acting as external examiner I have seen significant changes to the structured delivery of the curriculum as well as an adaption of content. The course now has a good balance and a joined-up feel to it across studio and taught lecture modules that was not evident 4 years ago. Outside of studio there is a strong emphasis on the teaching of construction and also humanities in each year that can be seen feeding through into studio project work. This is to be commended. Of note this year was the use of sketchbooks in the year 2 Design Principles & Methods module. The processes articulated in this module are things that should be valued and consolidated as part of a process in all design work. It also encourages students to question and think about their work and approaches. I understand that this module may be being reconsidered this coming year, but the distinctiveness offered as a standalone module should not be undervalued.

Communications across the course between taught lecture modules and studio in all years seems much improved and the timing of deliveries are coordinated thereby adding value.

The studios in year 3 have a great diversity about them and the opportunity offered to the students to follow a certain direction or interest is important. An attempt was made this year to engage Unit leaders in designing more specific assessment criteria appropriate to their different Unit approaches or priorities. I understand this had only limited success and so generally assessment criteria remained generic across all units. This is fine but the need to maintain, encourage and support the diversity and to see this coming through in the end of product for each unit is important.

I had no concerns over the actions taken to mitigate Covid-19 and any affects of industrial action.

Please include consideration of the following:

- *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*

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

Please include consideration of the following:

I had the opportunity to look at the year 3 Practice & Management module and studio work across the 3 years, together with year 2 & 3 Humanities. The marking standards were appropriate and fair, and I had no concerns. Both modules are well considered and delivered.

The work at Cardiff is of a high and consistent standard when compared to other leading Schools of Architecture in the UK. There is now a greater consistency of quality across all years within the studio work.

I had no concerns over the actions taken to mitigate Covid-19 and any effects of industrial action.

- *module marks are an accurate reflection of the standards they achieved, and the award classification reflects their academic attainment on their degree programme.*
- *if scaling has been recommended by the pre-Examining Board, there is appropriate justification for the recommendation based on the scaling*

guidance and the proposed scaling methodology to be applied to the marks is appropriate

- *the application of the Safety Net Policy to ensure that students' award classification reflects their academic attainment on the degree programme, and that the degree classification is not affected by any potential dip in their academic performance in assessments undertaken during a period of disruption.*
- *Highlighting where the Safety Net Policy could not be applied/or only in part due to specific PSRB requirements and the outcomes of the discussion and decisions made.*
- *the academic standards of degrees meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications' framework.*
- *the degrees awarded by the University are valid and reliable and are of an equivalent standard to degrees awarded in previous years.*
- *confirmation that the degree outcomes of each programme under consideration are in line with the sector and meet any professional, statutory, regulatory body requirements.*
- *where issues have been identified, the main Examining Board have been clear in their deliberations and actions to safeguard the academic standards.*

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

I had the opportunity to look at the year 3 Practice & Management module and studio work across the 3 years, together with year 2 & 3 Humanities. The marking standards were appropriate and fair, and I had no concerns of variations in levels of expectations or achievements between different modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3. There is now a good stretch in the expectations designed into the course and good progression across the 3 years of the course.

Due diligence was observed in the marking and moderation processes as far as I could see.

I had no concerns over the actions taken to mitigate Covid-19 and any effects of industrial action.

Please include consideration of the following:

- *assessment variations used are appropriate, and where possible continue to test the module learning outcomes*
- *students continued to be provided with the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes as a result of the variations*
- *assessments continued to be conducted with care and due diligence to ensure that students were not academically disadvantaged as a result of the variations.*

4. **Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)** (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

Not applicable

Where possible please complete this section following the dissertation examining board determining the final award.

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

Please note that due to the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, Schools may have had limited time to enact changes.

I am conscious that the School has been very proactive in responding to comments previously raised. This has been noticeable and has happened incrementally following advice and guidance given over my period of time as an examiner. I commend the School on this.

The school is in a strong position to consolidate what it does and what it believes the ethos of the school should be.

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)

Not appropriate

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

Due to the need to for continued adaptations during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, we would be grateful if you could please include consideration of the following:

- *advice and guidance on where adaptations can be made to support a blend of high-quality on-campus and online learning for 2020/21 to support Schools with curriculum developments to address ongoing requirements to socially distance due to Covid-19.*

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

I have been impressed by the willingness of the school to respond each year to the external examiners' comments. There is now a greater clarity in the pedagogy in relation to the development of the course from one year to the next. In the first years of my examination period this was a little patchy. This has come about by staff being willing to communicate much more internally with each other and the School being open and willing to make changes. As a result, the studio projects from year 1 to year 2 and into year 3 can be seen to build relevant skill sets appropriate to each level and in preparation for the next. In particular, the year 1 studio projects have a nice range to them, and the outcomes have improved considerably as too have the outcomes from year 2 studio. Across all years there is now a system in place that is capable of delivering consistency and improvements where necessary. The studio also is well supported by the taught lecture modules and content being delivered at each level.

Cardiff has strengths across all areas of the course, and these are giving students in my opinion a very strong foundation to their architectural education. It is now a well-rounded degree course.

Please value the sketchbook as part of a student's approach to studying and working. It is too easy for this to get lost as a project moves into the computer. I would plea for it not to be consumed by other modules where its value may not be appreciated and valued.

Retain the variety of studio units in year 3 on offer to the students and encourage the breadth of approaches. Try to ensure that there is an opportunity to acknowledge these differences within the assessment criteria.

Continue to address the gender imbalance in the part time teaching staff delivering studio.

9. Issues for Response

To assist with a timely and detailed response to your report, we would be grateful if you could briefly summarise any issues referred to above that you would like to be specifically addressed in our institutional response.

1. Continue to address the gender imbalance in the part time teaching staff delivering studio.
2. Please value the sketchbook as part of a student's approach to studying and working. It is too easy for this to get lost as a project moves into the computer. I would plea for it not to be consumed by other modules where its value may not be appreciated and valued.
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