



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report and are available at <http://learning.cf.ac.uk/quality/review/external-examiners/reports/>.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Prof Katie Lloyd Thomas		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Newcastle University		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	MArch dissertations <i>MArch (dissertations)</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016/17	Date of Report:	2 May 2017

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff.**

### 1. Programme Structure

The dissertation programme is well structured and supported. In straddling over two years it gives adequate study and development for a piece of work of this length. It is in line with professional ARB graduate attributes criteria for Part 2 – No.4 (research). However, it is compulsory for all students in a large cohort of approx. 60 students, and I note that there are no optional routes on offer, apart from the independent selection of a topic and tutor.

This is a substantial piece of work, and students spend significant time working it in their final two years of study, by which time they would normally be developing a personal, even specialist, set of interests concerning architectural design. Although work was generally very competent and met the criteria and specification, not all students seemed fully engaged with the topics they had chosen which is a pity when this should be an opportunity for them to explore issues relevant to their development as designers before they begin their professional lives, or even to take a decision to pursue a research path. I wonder if the introduction of one or two optional routes in this module is something WSA might consider? Many schools in the UK more than one route for this piece of work – for example, offering elective-led options, group research projects, making a distinction between history/ theory, or technical, or ‘project’ based (creative practice) dissertations – and this enables students to work in ways which best suite their interests and skills.

It is normal in architecture schools to recognise that architectural research methods are diverse and often include creative explorations (drawing, prototyping, film-making etc.) and may start from a concern with a ‘domain’ more than with a closed and

prescribed research question. I note that the criteria reward a more limited notion of research than this, emphasising being thorough and rigorous, over originality and initiative, and WSA might consider reviewing criteria to encourage a wider range of research modes and riskier undertakings.

## **2. Academic Standards**

The module meets QAA and benchmark standards, and demonstrates parity in terms of word length, expectations and marking with other similar modules in the UK that I have come into contact with.

I did not see any failing pieces of work, so cannot comment on the bare pass, but the middle and high standard of work was very competent, showing good use and understanding of academic conventions, and that these are capable students with good language skills not always typical of UK architecture schools, if not always as ambitious, or engaged with contemporary debates as one might expect in students completing RIBA Part II.

## **3. The Assessment Process**

Each external examiner read and viva'd approx. 13-14 dissertations. We were supplied with marks but not with the feedback sheets. I am not aware of dissertation vivas at any other schools in the UK, but it is a great opportunity for students to articulate their findings and research, and to have due recognition given to this substantial piece of work. The process was beautifully organised with plenty of time given to each student. It was particularly rewarding where students had really engaged with their research (and this was sometimes also the case at the lower end of the marking).

The dissertations had been first marked by just one internal marker some months previously, and a final mark agreed in discussion with the dissertation tutor, who had not (as I understand it) necessarily seen the finished dissertation as submitted. This left the marking somewhat open at the point of the viva, and there could be more clarity about the role of the viva. Is it simply confirming the mark, or an additional point of marking? Certainly marks were altered at this point.

WSA might consider having two internal markers before the external examiner process. Simplest would be to formalise the tutor's role in marking, which would both ensure their input is based on their reading of the final submission and lessen the external examiner's role.

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

This is my first year as EE. From my predecessor Lorens Holm's report I would surmise that there had been few changes to the module and arrangements (although students are only submitting one hard copy this year – and I was very glad to be able to have been sent these – thank you!)

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

I was very well briefed with documentation prior to the examining, and didn't feel I needed any induction. It was very helpful that tutor and chair were present in the viva's especially to give some guidance at the start. Perhaps in the first year of examining a little more than 5 minutes could be given in the schedule to briefing before the students arrive!

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

The dissertation is a substantial part of a student's work and all too often it is only seen by one or two markers, and students have no chance to discuss it. That WSA gives each student the opportunity of a viva process is exemplary practice, and our two days in the school were beautifully organised.

I was also impressed by the diligence and engagement of staff giving so much of their time to this process over the two days to be in the viva's and in the exam board, and, in general, by the comportment and conduct of the students in the viva's themselves.

## **7. Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations (External Examiners for postgraduate Master's Programmes only, see also 9.23-9.29 below)**

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

## 9. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-8 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
<b>Programme/Course Information</b>				
9.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
9.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>				
9.6	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
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
<b>Coursework and Practical Assessments</b>				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?			N/A
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?			N/A
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?			N/A
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?			N/A
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
<b>Sampling of Work</b>				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?			N/A
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?			N/A
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?			N/A
9.19	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?			N/A
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>				
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?		N	
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A
<b>Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)</b>				
9.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	Y		
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?	Y		
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?	Y		
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?	Y		
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	Y		
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?	Y		
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?	Y		

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:

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

#### **SAMPLING OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

External Examiners shall be expected to see prescribed numbers and ranges of Dissertations, but not to mark them, on the following basis:

At least 10% of Dissertations for a postgraduate taught Master's Programme, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure) must be seen by the External Examiner(s). Where the total number is less than 10, all Dissertations must be seen by the External Examiner(s) #.

Dissertations seen by External Examiners should include examples from across the whole range of achievement (i.e. Pass with Distinction, Pass, Fail).

External Examiners will retain the right to see other Dissertations at random.

# Where more than one External Examiner is appointed on a Programme, at least 10% of Dissertations, or a minimum of 10 (whichever is the higher figure), should be seen collectively by the External Examiners.