



## EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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

	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 Subjects Covered by this Report including any dissertation stage reports	MArch Dissertations		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-16	Date of Report:	08.04.2016

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 module – including its placement within the MArch programme - is very clearly structured. The students get adequate time (unlike in many other UK architecture schools) to develop a robust piece of research and writing that allows them to cover substantial ground. The dissertation aims, which become the basis for the assessment criteria for the feedback sheet, are clear and useful in terms of the students being able to peg their work. It seems though that while this can be very helpful for medium and weak students, the ‘deliverables’ can be somewhat limiting or rigid for the top end students who may be capable of producing more challenging, critical and experimental work. It would thus be good to perhaps use the structure as a guide to ensure the students go through the necessary steps and rigour, but not as too deterministic a tool. It may also be useful to introduce an intermediate ‘review’ stage (in small groups, e.g. two or three supervisors’ students) - say two months into the module - on topic formulation, research questions and possible case studies. This would help in terms of basic checks on validity or originality of topic, critical questioning, research methods and the opportunity of bringing in the inputs of a couple of tutors in addition to the supervisor early on in the programme.

Clarification for points 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 – the dissertation module being a type of coursework, I have interpreted ‘question papers’ to be the module brief/ aims, agendas and issues the module description sets out and have commented on those (see above).

## **2. Academic Standards**

I looked at thirteen dissertations myself (approximately a fourth of the class) but between all four external examiners, we had read all the dissertations, i.e. the entire cohort (clarification for 8.12). At the external examiners' moderation meeting, we exchanged notes on the ones each of us had seen by comparing top, middle and lower end work to check for lateral parity. Based on this, overall, the academic standard seems to be very good, the top end work being excellent. We in fact suggested putting forth the best piece for the RIBA dissertation award. There was a reasonably low number of fails even after applying fairly stringent criteria. The strength of the school seems to be a certain rigour of research, especially the kind of involved and detailed empirical investigation that a good proportion of the works had. A bit more can perhaps be done in terms of helping the middle to low scoring dissertations to do better. The suggested intermediate 'review', I believe, could be of particular help here.

## **3. The Assessment Process**

The assessment process seems extremely thorough and to my mind this is a commendable aspect of the dissertation module. The assessment criteria, as mentioned earlier, are very clear and evidently give students clear pegs to formulate their work. As mentioned earlier, it would be good to make sure that originality and criticality are valued. This is already implicit in the assessment criteria 'conception' or 'content' – and simply need to be consciously and actively pursued. The assessment process itself is many-stepped and includes a viva. This gives the student an opportunity to have their work heard and to explain/ clarify their approach. The process ensures fairness since it allows the assessment to be filtered through a range of different perspectives and opinions (internal examiner, supervisor and external examiners individually and as a group) at various stages. Save for very few occasions, I found myself agreeing - within a small range of variation - with the internal marks awarded.

Clarification for point 8.2 – there were no major structural changes to the existing assessment process of the dissertations this year. Following an external examiner's suggestion from last year, we were each sent a representative cross section of dissertations (low to high end with finer gradations in between), which was very helpful.

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

Not applicable, this being my first year as external examiner at the WSA.

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

I was given adequate preparatory material beforehand, which included documents on programme and module descriptions, dissertation handbook, assessment formats and criteria, examination procedure and boarding/lodging/ travel information. There was also a verbal induction before the actual external examination process commenced.

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

The school's strength seems to lie in robust empirical research – e.g. rigorous architectural and/or urban documentation, mapping, historical study, thorough descriptions and analysis. This is welcome in the field of architectural research where

one sees increasingly less of empirical rigour and hence needs to be preserved. It would be good to develop a bit more of critical questions, thinking and ability, centred around an awareness of the larger or broader questions the research potentially illuminates, the nature of knowledge or critique that students produce and their implications. The good/ very good/ excellent students seem to be doing this already, but the rest can possibly be helped a bit more with this. Again, other than keeping this pursuit alive all along, the 'review' mentioned earlier could help in getting closer to this and sharpening these dimensions.

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

Not applicable.

## 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?	X		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?			X
<b>Draft Examination Question Papers</b>				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	X		
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	X		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	X		
<b>Marking Examination Scripts</b>		N/A		
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?			
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?	X		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	X		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	X		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
<b>Clinical Examinations (if applicable)</b>		N/A		
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?	X		
<b>Examining Board Meeting</b>				

		<b>Yes (Y)</b>	<b>No (N)</b>	<b>N/A (N/A)</b>
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	X		
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?	X		
<b>Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)</b>		<b>N/A</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:

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