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Sent by email to takero@t-sa.co.uk

17 October 2016

Dear Mr Shimazaki,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2015–2016

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BSc in Architectural Studies.

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

1. Your comments regarding how the specifics of what students are studying or working on become unclear and light in weight with the focus getting lost and the works end up a little generic.
2. Your comments regarding the final outcomes of the design proposals in relation to the specificity of the Unit themes.
3. Your comments highlighting that verbal communication and presentation was not satisfactory and in some instances, it was felt that the verbal presentation underwhelmed the portfolio.
4. Your comments regarding the availability of tuition from tutors during the closing weeks of Units when students are preparing their final drawings.
5. Your suggestion that the year coordinators should be involved in the discussion in the afternoon feedback sessions with External Examiners.

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6. Your detailed comments on the role External Examiners played in the assessment process

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The School agrees that the response of many students to the specific qualities and challenges of the site they were working on was in many cases overly abstracted, or not sufficiently vivid. This is an aspect of design that the School is keen to improve. The School will pay particular attention to these issues next year in its conversations with unit leaders and students.
2. The School is pleased to note External Examiner reports of some improvement in drawing skills, but will continue to work in this aspect and will encourage unit leaders to advance a particular attitude to representation in their Unit.
3. It is unusual for WSA students to be criticised for their lack of verbal articulacy. The School thanks you for your comment and will pay attention to the issue in the coming session.
4. The School thanks you for your observations on the tuition available in the closing weeks of the year and are taking measures to address this issue.
5. The feedback session with the external examiners was very well received by the unit leaders and the proposal that the year chair and/ or BSc scheme convenor should also attend the session next year is welcomed. The School will continue to encourage Unit Leaders to develop the specificity of their approach.
6. The Head of Quality and Standards has been in discussion with the School regarding the role of the External Examiner. The External Examiner Handbook sets out the University's expectations of the role and how they align with national expectations. These are fully aligned to the Quality Assurance Agency guidelines about External Examining in its [UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B7: External Examining](#) along with the [Higher Education Academy](#).

The University attaches great importance to peer review from External Examiners as a key means of ensuring that:

- the academic standards of University awards and their component parts are set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that the standards of student performance are properly judged against this;
- the final assessment process accurately measures student achievement against intended learning outcomes, is rigorous, fair and fairly operated, and is in line with University Regulations and policies;

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- the University is able to compare the standard of its awards with those of other higher education institutions;
- the University's provision is continuously enhanced to reflect developments in the sector, institution and discipline.

The External Examiners role in assessment is to verify the quality of final assessment processes and ensure that academic standards of awards are set and maintained at the appropriate level (rather than to seek to judge individual cases).

Whilst there are subtle differences between institutions and subject disciplines, many UK institutions will subscribe to the principles outlined by the QAA to improve the effectiveness, transparency and credibility of the system, especially with external audiences.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure and academic standards;
2. the “varying briefs are fascinating; contemporary issues and thought provoking for any architectural students”;
3. the training of middle to weaker students is good;
4. helpful feedback session with Unit Tutors.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

In order to meet the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University website and will be available to all students and staff.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



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