



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:	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	M. Arch Dissertations <i>MArch (dissertations)</i>		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016-17	Date of Report:	28.04.2017

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 programme structure is fairly systematic, starting with a general orientation to research and methodologies, to topic selection and development with key markers built in along the way to ensure progress. It is also very good that the general research methods initiation is started the previous academic year, de-facto giving students a full year to develop a robust piece of work. The module handbook is very thorough and informative. However, while this works reasonably well for lower, medium and even some of the very good students, it might be a bit too prescriptive and partially hinder creativity, especially for the really talented students who may want to think outside the box. It would also be good to build in a bit more of peer review and learning involving other staff and students, within what is otherwise a fairly lonely dissertation journey. One way to do this would be to introduce a 'cross-review' between two or three tutors and their students. This would preserve the intimacy of a 'smallish' group but open up students to other thoughts and possibilities. This would also help spot obvious problems that may just not have been picked up by the supervisor, by bringing in another pair of eyes.

(NOTE: While the points 9.3-9.5 on 'Question Papers' are not strictly applicable for dissertation examination as such, I have commented here on the 'Dissertation Guide' that sets out the task, articulates its components, format and so on, to address roughly equivalent issues).

2. Academic Standards

The overall academic standard seems quite good, with very few in the 'fail' region. I happened to not see the very top end work, but saw some very rigorous, interesting and truly commendable research in the high 70s. In this cluster of high marks, I found a type of 'research integrity' that I think is very valuable. However, more innovative and critical work might need to be encouraged to really help some of these high 70s get to the level of excellent and outstanding work. This is discussed in greater detail under point 7.

3. The Assessment Process

The assessment process seems quite rigorous clearly with a view to maintain fairness and impartiality – with the first marking by a staff member who is not the supervisor, this being then discussed with the supervisor for his viewpoint, then the student being examined by the internal marker with a general oversight from the external examiner through a viva. I read 15 dissertations, which contained a cross section of marks. This year, while I did see a generally good spread, I did not see any 'fails' or any work from the very top end (80+). It would be good if, to the extent possible, external examiners could be given work from the entire marks range, since that would help us understand the marking scale better. It would also be useful to put in place a better system of internal moderation, since sometimes the variations in marking patterns between different tutors seemed to be quite a lot.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

Compared to last year, more time for internal marking and feedback has been built in, which is a positive move. Responding to our comments encouraging more fluidity in the somewhat deterministic dissertation structure (e.g. literature review, aims and objectives, case studies, and conclusion) the module handbook seems to have been adjusted to some extent. This seems to have yielded in some cases more interesting and less rigid dissertation format. However, this could possibly be encouraged further, possibly by making the handbook intentionally even less prescriptive.

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

N.A. (In my first year – 2015-16 – the induction process was very adequate).

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

One of the strengths of the students of this school and tutors is their engagement with 'architectural' material and reading buildings spatially and architecturally. The other strength is rigour of empirical research. It would be great to enhance this with more critical thinking – since the combination of empirically robust and critically innovative research would be excellent.

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

The overall range of work was quite varied and a reasonable proportion was between high-middle to very good or high levels. The research was mostly very sincerely done, with a lot of rigour and research integrity, the breadth and depth of some of which was truly impressive. A good number seemed to address socially and environmentally relevant issues, and reflected a sense of social responsibility (e.g. work on autism and architectural creativity or the use of particular local timbers in architecture). The school needs to retain and encourage this approach. However, I found very few to have a truly innovative or original topic formulation. The key to this may be to encourage a practice of raising 'research questions' as an *iterative* process. Informal workshops to practice this, as a speculative and heuristic process, could be a less formal but creative way to encourage such thinking. There is also the possibility of encouraging a more critical approach. Asking students to read relevant literature or to enquire into particular instances or situations is fine, but if these then figure as 'literature review' or 'case studies' in the actual dissertation document, most of them would tend to approximate to a similar format and hinder other creative possibilities. It may help to develop the enquiry around conceptual questions and their individual logic/ demands instead. One other key aspect is how the school would accommodate work based in (often non-western) cultures and contexts where the conventional 'archives' and 'referencing systems' do not work/ apply. It would be important to have more open systems to accommodate, encourage and reward – in such instances, possibly 'less academically conventional' but more personal field based investigations, oral history and other unconventional processes and findings.

8. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

N.A.

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)
Programme/Course Information				
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?	Y		
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?	Y		
9.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
9.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
Marking Examination Scripts		(N/A)		
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?			
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			
9.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			
9.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
9.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
9.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
9.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y see points 2 and 3)		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)		(N/A)		
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			
Sampling of Work				
9.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Examining Board Meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
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?	Y		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)		(N/A)		
9.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
9.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			
9.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
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 see pts 2 & 3)		
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

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.