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Sent by email

14 July 2017

Dear Mr Ward,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Reports 2016–2017

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Reports for the MSc in Sustainable Mega-Buildings and for the MSc in Theory and Practice of Sustainable Design.

Your Reports have 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

MSc in Sustainable Mega-Buildings Report

1. One formal class test is a little light in comparison with some other courses and it would have been helpful for external examiners to have been able to comment on the questions in advance.

Both Reports

2. Student reservations about the quality of course accommodation and reliability of School computers.
3. Issues of confidentiality of design or operating performance in buildings visited by student as part of their studies.

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

1. All ASM MSc courses of the School include only one class test as part of the shared module ART041 and the School's course leaders are content with this arrangement. The School will share the class test questionnaire with the external examiners before they are sat and also plans to adjust the assignment of ART627 to require students to be more critical in addressing the assigned topic.
2. Initially, the School had issues with the quality of the space in terms of reliability of the technology and noise. However, the quality of the space has improved a lot gradually and a door has been installed in the classroom to reduce external noise. The rate of technological failure has also decreased substantially.

With regards to computers, the students are supposed to use their own computers, and they are notified about this before the start of the course. The four computers that are provided in the classroom are for additional help. The students never raised the issue of reliability of those computers with the School. Where there are any reliability issues, the School has substantial IT support to resolve them

The School will endeavour to ensure that School-provided computers are performing reliably and try to increase the number of computers available.

3. Students like to visit renowned buildings since these visits enhance their academic motivation. However, most iconic large-scale buildings have some confidentiality issues for security and/or commercial reasons. Selecting these buildings is a trade-off between the quality of the building and the access to the building data.

The School will try to negotiate with the management of the current tall building to get access to more information. If that is not possible, the School will try to find a large scale local building where students can have access to more information.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. steps taken by the School and in response to your earlier comments to reduce slightly the intensity of the taught part of the programmes.

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

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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 Reports 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,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar