

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:	Takero Shimazaki		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Takero Shimazaki Architects		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report	BSc Architecture		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2015-2016	Date of Report:	20.06.2016

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 overall Programme structure is solid and productive. The Year is divided into 7 Design Units with varying Briefs and sites. The sizes of these Units seem appropriate. The design Unit briefs is thorough and good, covering some excellent topics and sites around the UK. The topics covered in the Units that I saw in depth included, 'Living with rising water level' in Great Yarmouth, 'Architectural Memory in Bristol's Castle Park, 'Architecture of the water's edge' in Birkenhead Docks in Liverpool and Proposals for Dungeness in Sussex.

The varying briefs are fascinating; contemporary issues and thought provoking for any architectural students. The set up for the Units are therefore very assuring.

Students also work on quite in-depth complimentary studies on Structure, Construction, Environmental studies and Historical and Theoretical research within their design works. This makes Cardiff students capable of organising buildings and integrates these elements into their final Architectural proposal with varying degrees of success.

The year-long design projects seem to offer good basis for design discussions, tutorials and research. However, perhaps a little more studio time with the tutors would help the final outcome. It was also noted that some tutors were unable to see the students towards the end of year for about 3 weeks, when the students were preparing the final drawings. This should be changed so that the tutors have more input towards the final few weeks of production.

2. Academic Standards

The Academic standard is good level overall. The works and the standards vary across the whole year. Also there are differences between the Units in terms of outputs. Some Unit briefs are over loaded. Simpler briefs seem to allow students develop and achieve well-balanced, thorough and creative output. Unit briefs that are over complicated ask the students to look at too many aspects. Focus on site, context, media (i.e. Materials, Models and Drawing format), and a clear set of expected final outcome would perhaps help the students.

The students are required to satisfy many aspects of design. It is excellent that the school is encouraging this. However, sometimes, specifics of what they are studying or working on become unclear and light in weight. Perhaps the focus gets a little bit lost and the works end up a little generic. A good example of this is the initial studies of sites and contexts in some units. The students seem to have carried out some excellent initial studies. However, the output of these studies is not carried through to the final proposals to 'test' against the context through drawings, models, textures, and materials. Often, the context is drawn as 'outlines' in the background and the characters of Norfolk or Birkenhead are not clearly apparent in the final schemes.

Another two Units I reviewed in depth had some excellent relationship to the sites in the final projects. Surrounding context was always drawn in every project pinned up, in terms of mass, form, texture, material and even atmosphere. The scales of the projects in these Units were also excellent in that the final buildings were not too large. In the contemporary architectural practice, there are less and less large-scale projects with high budget. It was refreshing to see projects that are manageable, resolved to excellent details and standards. It would be great to see more of this.

Having said this, the training of middle to weaker students is good. The weaker students seem to benefit from working with a specific tutor for a year and some Units seem to provide good platform for them.

3. The Assessment Process

It was quite hard to be involved in the examination process where the examiners were asked not to make any comments or suggestions. In my experience of other Universities, an open dialogue with the internal and external examiners create excellent outcomes. The tutors and the internal examiners would benefit much more if there were some dialogues, including with the students and the school as a whole in order to learn and improve. As it stands, it feels as though the school may not be progressing as clearly or as fast, due to the over protection from having these open dialogues. Architecture deals with very wide aspects of society. If the school assessment process is too protected and insulated, then it would not allow for the department to flourish and benefit from the outside visitors' input.

The longer time given to review the projects were helpful. However, it is not quite clear if the whole process needs to be stretched to 3 days if the external examiners are asked to be silent during the reviews.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

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

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

Overall, some of the final outcomes of the design proposals are slightly disappointing in relation to the specificity of the Unit themes. The works don't seem to challenge the conventions of a WSA format and style of work that has been its signature over many years. The end product format is very similar across the year with summary of initial studies, large set of plans, sections and elevations with 1:20 detail drawings. Having set up the Unit system a few years ago across the year and inviting excellent set of tutors with interesting briefs and ideas, it is a little strange that the outcomes are quite similar in terms of the format and drawing styles. It is a BSc level and therefore it does make sense that the students are taught the base skills in architectural design. Separating into Units would provide more 'hands on' teaching. However, some Unit 'agenda' or methodologies should be allowed to emerge more specifically in order to maximise the opportunities and respond to the specifics of the briefs of the Units.

For example, the Unit brief with Memory in Bristol is excellent in terms of the clarity of the set up and the outcome. The students' works were clearly laid out, location identified, materially creative and detailed, and the proposals excellently sensitive and appropriate. The final portfolio reflected the 'all rounder' approach of WSA, yet there were some specific focus on the media, models, and the final drawings incorporating the initial studies as well as the context to which the final design applies to.

It was very helpful to have a feedback session this year with the current Unit tutors. It would have been even better if the members of internal staff chaired the sessions. We suggested that the year coordinators should be involved in the discussion in the afternoon session and it worked much better. It was very good to discuss each Unit specifically. I would also encourage Unit tutors to speak out and voice their thoughts on what worked, what didn't and what can be made better.

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)

I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting the school over the last 4 years and discussing the course with the internal tutors, the internal examiners and the other external examiners. It is a well-rounded school, where the students are introduced to a wide

range of architectural skills and knowledge. The school team have made our visits as useful and accommodating as possible and the information provided were thorough and helpful.

There have been many discussions and suggestions from everyone over the last 4 years. The school has tried its best to integrate these comments and take them on board.

The difficulty for the school seems to be in the balance of integrating a Unit system, which originated in London schools such as the Architecture Association, where each Unit has an architectural agenda and a specific theme they follow and pursue. In London Universities, where the Unit system is successful, each Unit agenda is developed over years to follow a certain research and proposition. Mixing this approach in a school, where traditionally students were taught together across year group has its challenges. I have consciously made comments on this topic over the last 4 years.

As this is a BSc level, in many levels, it works very well to teach the students some fundamental base architectural skills across the year group. WSA students seem to learn these skills and are well equipped for their year out and for the next step in education.

However, it is advisable to take the opportunities that arise with the Unit system more seriously in that the both tutors and the students are allowed some space to experiment, investigate, pursue, challenge and tackle specific agendas and for the outcome of the Units to reflect these. It does not need to be big changes. It may in general be subtle shifts from its current set up, where some flexibility may be given on what each Unit might focus on in terms on the list of the final portfolio materials. For example, some Units may focus more on 'making', as the research topic might relate to material memory of a place. Some others may focus on more narrative or diagrammatic type of drawings. Visually, each Unit can have its own way of drawing or applying atmosphere for example.

Economical, political and social situation surrounding architectural profession is changing constantly. The Unit briefs presented highlight these issues. It was very encouraging to find Units with brief topics such as Welsh Regionalism, Water's edge in Liverpool and Living with rising water levels. However, it was felt that the tutors, as well as the students should be given more specific end product expectation per Unit and for the Units to be given the chance to develop its own method and final outcomes.

Critical thinking is more encouraged. Some of the verbal communication and presentation was not satisfactory and in some instances, it was felt that the verbal presentation underwhelmed the portfolio. As they study, it is helpful for the students to question and to form their own views on the topics of their study. Perhaps, it is important for each Unit, and student to acknowledge and understand whom their audience is in their design projects. Who are they proposing their schemes to? What aspects of society are they challenging through their projects?

I would like to express my thank you and appreciation for having me for 4 years to see the improvements and the year on year works. I hope the process has been useful for the school and the University and that the school will keep producing some great works.

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?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?		N	
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
Marking Examination Scripts				
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?	Y		
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
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?	Y		
9.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	Y		
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		
9.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?			NOT KNOWN
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
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		
Examining Board Meeting				
9.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?		N	

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (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?	Y		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
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?			
9.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			
9.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			
9.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			
9.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			
9.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			
9.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			

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.