

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - BSc in Architectural Studies

Dear Ms van Heyningen,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Welsh School of Architecture 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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School. The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

1. ***[2, second para] the External Examiner's observation that "In general I felt that presentation standards were good, but that too much emphasis was placed on creating attractive images using photoshop to produce texture, rather than the proper examination of a proposition in plan and section which would be proper for a BSc student";***

There is a tendency, in most schools of architecture at a comparable level, where Photoshop and Renderings have become rather dominant within our visual culture, therefore wrongly understood as a substitute for traditional methods of representation and architectural thinking. Newly introduced programme structures under the heading of "bim", do open up this gap even further more. We will address this problem through strengthening our Design Principles and Methods modules (DPM I-III), where we also introduce our students to digital design tools and design studio.

2. ***[3, second bullet point and 8.10] the External Examiner's indication that she did not have an opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of "representative projects from each unit".***

The School adopted the RIBA Validation Panel practice in terms of selecting a top, middle and low performing portfolio in each UNIT (RIBA does this through one selection per academic year).

This fair practice has been introduced as a response to adopted policies of Cardiff University for the academic year 2012-13.

70 students displayed their work (our External Examiners had access to all displays) and 21 students were interviewed (30% of the cohort).

The University has confirmed that it will be reviewing its changes to assessment policies and we have reported the External Examiners' concerns on this issue in our annual report to the University.

Your comments [at 3] on the role of the External Examiner have been noted. The University has recently adopted policies that reflect changing sector-wide expectations of the role of External Examiners, whereby they are invited to focus on the overall standards and quality of awards, rather than the achievements of individual students.

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

a. [1, 2 and 3] positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Dr S L Williamson

for Dr C B Turner
Academic Registrar