

EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Mary Ann Steane		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Cambridge		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	MArch Dissertations		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2013/14	Date of Report:	7 April 2014

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

All the external examiners were agreed that broadly speaking, the programme introduction, timetable, and guidance together offer students a strong and very clear and very detailed framework within which to develop their research theses. There was however also a general feeling that those students pursuing topics in the history/theory area might benefit from being offered an alternative thesis model to the one currently outlined, which seems more suited to topics in building science or social science.

2. Academic Standards

I can confirm that all the work I saw was of a satisfactory standard for an MArch level programme, while the very strongest dissertations were both a pleasure to look at and to read, and pursued a diverse range of relevant questions in an exemplary manner.

3. The Assessment Process

Dissertations and all other related material concerning the programme were sent ahead at a point that allowed plenty of time for the external marking. Arrangements of the final viva interviews at Cardiff were also satisfactory, and gave all students a suitable opportunity to answer questions or air issues concerning their work and its outcomes, in order that the external examination moderation process could be carried out fairly and expeditiously. Appropriate

reference was made to learning outcomes and assessment criteria during a moderation meeting at which all the highest and lowest marked work was reviewed, along with those dissertations whose marks were at a grade boundary. Four marks were slightly adjusted as a result of our deliberations, (three up and one down).

I understand that initially the dissertations were divided between the four external examiners on the basis of their expertise and interest in the topics studied. While I can see this is sensible, it was also very useful that I was sent a good spectrum of dissertations as regards their quality/performance, although I understand this was by accident rather than design. While there was an opportunity to look at all of the dissertations in the final moderation meeting, of course, I feel it is good practice for external examiners to be given such a spectrum as it enables a better overview of the programme and its outcomes and the issues in play. I note here that at our final meeting with the school, it was pointed out that this ambition raises questions concerning the timetabling of the internal marking.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

(N/A)

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

It was slightly curious that the external examination induction for 2013/14 is to take place after this dissertation examination process. Nevertheless I can note here that all necessary information about the MArch dissertation programme was provided, and/or questions answered, ahead of time, and having recently acted as an external examiner previously at a comparable institution, I am generally aware of my duties and responsibilities in this role.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

- As already noted in section 1 the guidance on research methods and thesis writing /production is clear and comprehensive, the current model outlined therein is more obviously applicable to theses in the areas of technology and social science. I wonder whether it might not be useful to formulate an alternative model, alongside verbal guidance on the different questions and approaches to which different models are suited.
- It seemed surprising, given the current expertise at the Welsh School, that not more of the theses were in the area of building science/sustainability.
- I was also struck that few of the students made reference to any relation between their design and thesis projects, despite the fact that this linkage is what sets in motion the process of opening questions, establishing scope and narrowing focus of thesis topics, and is stated as a potentially synergistic outcome in the programme introduction. Perhaps an event at which students are expected to outline their research projects via brief powerpoint presentations might stimulate useful intra-unit discussion about the relevance and significance of such work to designers more generally, and to the design projects in hand ?

- While many of the dissertations were beautifully presented, few used illustration captions very intelligently. Ideally, captions can supplement as they parallel and make visual what is stated in the main text, so that taken together the captions offer a synopsis of the project.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)
(N/A)

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			(N/A)
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			(N/A)
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			(N/A)
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			(N/A)
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			(N/A)
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			(N/A)
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			(N/A)
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			(N/A)
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			(N/A)
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	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)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			(N/A)
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			(N/A)
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			(N/A)

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:

Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University,
McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE

Mary Ann Steane .