



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Guidance notes are available to support the completion of this Report via the Cardiff University Intranet [here](#) and from ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk.

	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	David Short		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of Nottingham		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	BSc in Architectural Studies		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2016 - 2017	Date of Report:	07/07/2017

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board (the **taught stage** Examining Board in the case of **postgraduate Master's programmes**).

Please note this form will be published online and should not make any reference to any individual students or members of staff in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

1. Programme Structure (curriculum design, programme structure and level, methods of teaching and learning)

The underlying curriculum design and programme structure are basically sound and form a solid framework for this undergraduate programme. Similarly the teaching and learning are well organised, delivered and structured by a committed and strong body of staff.

However I have one main observation to make, that within this structure, there appeared to be lack of linkage between one year to another in studio, and between some taught lecture modules and studio. Students undertake what is seen as a freer and creative year 1 studio programme but this then feeds into a very tightly disciplined year 2 programme that then led into a year 3 programme that demands students to think, question and research for themselves. All of these in themselves are admirable and appropriate qualities at these stages of the course but the concern is that with such demarcations between each year in this way students may not be well prepared for each level of studies. Some overlap between years in forming studio briefs or teaching could aid the progression and may facilitate students achieving their fullest potential.

I was also asked to review the Design Principles and Methods module across the first 3 years. Each in themselves are well considered as individual modules but they do not seem to be having the impact in supporting studio in the way that they were set up to do. The year 1 module seems to work well and the outcomes of the two assessments seem to be very good. Yet the drawing skills that were being taught did not seem to be translating through into consistently good basic orthogonal drawings of plans, sections and elevations in the students' final design project work. Without changing the nature of the assessments, there does seem to be a missing bridge to the architectural drawings. This does seem to rectify itself in year 2 studio.

The year 2 module was designed to teach CAD drawing skills and programmes and this seemed to work well although there were no discernible high end computer drawings evident in the exhibition of work.

The year 3 module that introduces computer scripting for specific visualisations is probably too specialist at this stage. Perhaps this should be offered as an elective or moved to the Part 2 programme.

In principle the DPM module sitting alongside studio should provide a useful tool to enhance the studio based skills. It could also be inherently adaptable to meet contemporaneous issues generated from within the school or from debates outside. This module can and perhaps should be used to introduce drawing skills. It also has the potential to be used as its title implies to discuss design principles and maybe even alternative approaches to design. I believe such a focus would see a positive outcome in studio.

I was also asked to review the Professional Practice Module. I found this to be rigorously taught and examined and the content was appropriate and relevant. This is a well-judged module that links studio design project work through into the real world of practice. In particular I thought the study and report undertaken on valuing building projects was well considered. The mini block teaching and seminar sessions also seem a good way of delivering the material in both parts of the course. Students are being challenged to study and work critically.

2. Academic Standards (comparability with other UK HEIs, achievement of students, any PSRB requirements)

I will comment on the studio work for each year group.

Year 1 – At the top end the work was comparable with top UK Schools of Architecture. Some of the work suggested engagement, a high degree of creativity and skill. However the standard of work seemed to tale of fairly quickly where there were glimpses of individual quality but lacked a sense of consistency across some of the core concerns of year 1; the ability to plan and organise function, form and space and then draw this skilfully in context.

Year 2 – The work across the year perhaps acted as a consolidation for skills missing in year 1 bringing all students to a good level by the end of the year. However there was a lack of stand-out work that really engaged with the contextual agenda set out at the beginning of year. If students could be challenged to continue and develop these early studies and apply them more evidently to their project work this may add value to the outcomes. Perhaps students could also be asked to reflect

after the first design project and possibly the second on how well their individual projects responded to their contextual recordings and studies. If this were to be done more critically it may also help students prepare for the more responsive work required in year 3.

Year 3 – The year showed a rounding up of the skills taught in year 1 & 2. The quality of the work again was comparable to the work of other top architectural schools but without reaching great heights. If Cardiff is to maintain its reputation as one of the top six schools of Architecture in the UK then there needs to be more and clearer evidence of top work.

My comments are made to support a school that is held in high regard by the profession and other academic institutions and are therefore offered to try to consolidate and enhance this reputation.

3. The Assessment Process (enabling achievement of aims and learning outcomes; stretch of assessment; comparability of standards between modules of the same level)

The taught lecture modules that I was asked to review were in my opinion assessed fairly and appropriately.

I hold some concerns about the assessment of the year 3 studio module. This important yearlong module is given one formal assessment point at the very end of the year. Although students are receiving written and verbal feedback on a regular basis this is not the same as either already receiving a percentage of marks for the module awarded at stages through the year or indicative grades at key stages of the work. In addition the first semester's work appeared to be largely ignored in the assessment of the year but in some studio units a lot of key informative work had been completed at this stage – master-planning or discrete individual projects. Some of this first semester work could form the basis of an interim assessment across all studio units. I worry about the pressure put on students by the current single point of assessment on what is such a large credit bearing module and also guest reviewers and markers on the day. However following the thorough moderation process on the second day of the examination process all marks awarded at the end of the year 3 studio module appeared to be fair and accurate.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

[Previous External Examiner Reports are available from the Cardiff University Website [here](#).]

This is my first year of examining and so I am not able to comment other than I did attend one day of the process as an observer last year and my impression is that the work was of a higher standard this year and that the marking standards had also been applied more rigorously.

5. Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only) (appropriateness of briefing provided, visits to School, programme handbooks and supporting information)

All material needed was received in good time and the whole process was efficiently organised and carried out.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement (good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment; opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities)

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only) (significant changes in standards, programme/discipline developments, implementation of recommendations, further areas of work)

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	
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?	Y		
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?	Y		
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?	Y		
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?	Y		
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?	Y		
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	Y		
8.10	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				
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				
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	
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
Examination of Master's Dissertations (if applicable)				
8.23	Did you receive a sufficient number of Dissertations to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
8.24	Was the sample in accordance with the University's sampling guidelines (guidelines provided below)?			N/A
8.25	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the Internal Examiners?			N/A
8.26	Were you able to attend the Master's Degree (Dissertation) Stage Examining Board?			N/A
8.27	If so, was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?			N/A
8.28	Were the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?			N/A
8.29	Were the standards of the awards recommended appropriate?			N/A
8.30	Comments on the Examination of Master's Dissertations. <i>Please provide any comments you may wish to make on the issues raised above.</i>			

Please return this Report, **in a Microsoft Word format**, by email to:
externalexaminers@cardiff.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