

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

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Rachel Sara		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	University of the West of England		
Programme and / or Modules Covered by this Report	Design focus: MArch 1 – Education in Practice MArch 2 AR5001 Design Thesis		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2017-18	Date of Report:	09.07.18

Please complete all information in the spaces provided and submit within **six weeks** of the Examining Board.

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 General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

Please extend spaces where necessary.

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

The structure of the course is very interesting. The opportunity for the first year of the course to be in practice gives great opportunities for students to undertake design and research alongside their practice work, with the potential for this to therefore provide a critical component to practice experience. There is an opportunity for this year to work a little harder for the course. In particular it might be that some of the more prosaic technical aspects could be explored more explicitly in this year (such as response to regulations such as planning, fire and accessibility).

The balance of the final year – with the combination of the design thesis, the practice management and economics work, and the dissertation seems good. There is the potential for more crossover between each of the elements. This might happen with an emphasis placed on the opportunity for alignment between the units run in the design studio and the dissertation topics. In order to achieve this the unit themes and allocations might need to be pushed further back into the year – with students potentially able to choose their units at the end of the first year. This may not be possible but if it were, could also bring the benefit of allowing unit leaders more time to prepare in advance, and even allow an opportunity for unit leaders to have more of an introduction into what other studios are doing.

The variety of the studio units is excellent. It was wonderful to see such a strong body of work presented from the unit led by [REDACTED] in his final year. Congratulations are in order for such a powerful conclusion to his time at Cardiff.

The opportunity for a 'free' unit or equivalent in Unit X is an exciting development. The way in which this kind of approach is structured will develop over time.

It is good to see a variety of units taking on complex social agendas. We all need to be attuned to the additional challenges that these projects can raise and be careful to craft our assessments carefully so that this work is valued appropriately (not for example reverting to assessment based largely on formal or aesthetic ideas embodied within the proposal). One example might be to explore a proposed structure of governance within the project. The unit specific assessment proformas are a great start with this and perhaps can be brought more to the forefront in the moderation processes.

It is also great to see craft and materiality driving a couple of units. This allowed an exploration into making that wonderfully informed some of the project proposals and brought a very developed tectonic exploration to the exhibition.

A continued attempt to provide variety across the studios may also mean that you try to minimise superficial similarities. Students perceived that there were '2 refugee projects, 2 craft projects, 2 housing projects' etc.

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

The students achieve high standards and the marking of work is in line with other UK HEI's that I am familiar with. I can confirm that the threshold standards of the RIBA/ARB criteria for Part II levels are being met.

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

Students are challenged to achieve at the highest levels. The proportion of students achieving firsts and 2:1s is very good (about ¼ of students achieve each of these), and reinforces the success of the course. The proportion of students gaining third class degrees is particularly small. However there are relatively high numbers of students with extenuating circumstances who may be masking the numbers passing at the lower levels.

The studios examination procedure is very well resourced and rigorous, with a clear briefing process for examiners. The process supports a good sense of occasion for graduating students. I would argue that you are quite right to ask internal staff to complete the moderation and marking process, as this is a process that can help to set academic benchmarks within the school. You may also consider sharing with students the process of assessment and moderation. They need to know that it is a fair and rigorous process, and sharing the procedures with them will help to raise their confidence in the process.

4. **Examination of Master's Dissertations** (sample of dissertations received, appropriateness of marking schemes, standard of internal marking, classification of awards)

N/A

5. Year-on-Year Comments

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

The move to Friary house as a temporary solution to studio space has worked well enough for students. However the impact might be felt more widely across the school as the M.Arch students are not as present in the Bute building and as a result there is some disconnect between the undergraduate and the masters students. I hope that a good solution is found soon, which will accommodate the architecture courses, with all of the studio and workshop spaces and interconnectivity that is so important to our design studio-based teaching.

6. **Preparation for the role of External Examiner (for new External Examiners only)** (appropriateness of briefing provided by the programme team and supporting information, visits to School, ability to meet with students, arrangements for accessing work to review)

I was clearly briefed on my role and given access to all the supporting information that I needed. I was able to scrutinise all of the design work and met with students both during their exam presentations, but also informally in a student-external examiner meeting. The process was set up very well – many thanks to the team.

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

This is a very strong course that performs consistently well, and lives up to its strong national reputation.

It is noteworthy that each unit has a budget that can be used appropriately depending on the priorities of the unit. This transparency is valued highly by students. In the forthcoming year I might raise the issue of student wellbeing as something that is explicitly addressed. This is an issue that has gained significant media coverage across HE, and is perhaps particularly an issue in architecture courses nationally. Ideas such as a personal tutor or a single point of contact for personal/non academic issues might be considered.

Across the course there may be opportunities for crossovers between modules, between units and between students. This might include more opportunities for group work, more shared studio crit days in which different groups (both students and tutors) can review work from other units. It might be that you use your

assessment grids as a guide to structuring feedback at these points. This might reinforce ideas about what is being valued in each unit.

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

N/A

9. 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				
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/A
Commenting on draft examination question papers				
9.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
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
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?			N/A
9.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
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?			N/A
9.10	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				
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?	Y		
Clinical examinations (if applicable)				
9.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
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?	Y		
9.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with	Y		

	established procedures and to your satisfaction?			
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)				N/A
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?			

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