

Academic & Student Support Services
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Simon Wright LLB
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Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to i.ward768@btinternet.com

07 December 2015

Dear Mr Ward,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Reports 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Reports for the MSc in Theory and Practice of Sustainable Design and MSc in Sustainable Mega-Buildings.

Your Report has been considered by the School 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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. Your indication of student concerns regarding project deadlines and the timing of class tests [both reports];
2. Your indication that you would like to be involved in identified planned changes to modules [both reports];
3. Your comments [in your report for MSc in Sustainable Mega-Buildings] on the need for student access to buildings being analysed.

The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The Architectural Science Masters tutors work closely well before every academic year to ensure submission deadlines and class tests are carefully planned and as evenly spread as possible. Full time students will, at specific times of Stage 1, have 3 modules running in parallel, therefore the submission deadlines of those modules will be close together. In previous years, and certainly this year, we scheduled submissions so that there is typically one submission in a week, with no more than two submissions in any one week. Occasional circumstances may require module leaders to postpone deadlines, which might have an impact on other modules running simultaneously.

Assessments of modules tend to cluster around November - December and February – March time. There may have been an issue with the timings of

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two class tests being one week apart this academic session – but the timings for those had been determined based on last year’s students’ feedback. This will be avoided in the current academic year by restructuring these two modules, in addition to another core module, into one module, assessed by one class test and one piece of course work. Moreover, module leaders have been informed that, where possible, for every 10-credit module there should be one point of assessment.

This is certainly the case for the MEGA specialist modules (6 pieces of course work for 60 credits) and similarly in the new core modules (20, and 10 credits). There is still scope to reconsider this in the other 3 core modules which currently require 2 pieces of course work each to assess the learning outcomes. However, every attempt will be made, within both formative and summative assessment methods, to ensure that modes, levels and frequency of assessments are appropriately spread across the 15-16 academic year. The School will also ensure the study trips and module assessments are better coordinated in the upcoming academic year.

2. The School has confirmed that in 2015-2016 three 10-credit modules have been replaced with one 20-credit module, and that a new 10-credit module has been introduced. The School will make the new module descriptions and syllabi available to you for comment and the School Board of Studies will consider any suggestions for further change for implementation in 2016-2017.
3. The programme leaders are liaising with major architectural practices (Foster and Partners, Make Architects) to ensure the case studies assigned for the project module are fully accessible and that the building information is delivered by knowledgeable architects from those practices.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. Your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. Your particular commendation of opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and understanding throughout the programme.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

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 the University website and will be available to all students and staff.

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.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar