

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM (TAUGHT PROGRAMMES)



External Examiners are required to complete and submit Reports at least annually and within one month of the programme Examining Board.

Completed External Examiner Report Forms should be sent to:

ExternalExaminers@cardiff.ac.uk

Arrangements for the payment of fees and expenses will be made upon receipt of this Report Form and upon receipt in hard copy of a completed External Examiner Claim Form for Reimbursement of Fees and Expenses and expenses receipts. This Report Form and the associated Claim Form may be downloaded at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/regis/ifs/exex/rep/index.html>

External Examiner Reports are made available in full to students. For this reason, and in accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, individual staff and students should not be named within the Report.

Please note that External Examiner reports are circulated widely in order that any necessary action can be taken. A copy of the final report of an External Examiner will also be passed to their successor.

Cardiff University prefers External Examiners to complete their Report Forms electronically and to submit them by email as indicated above. If, for any reason an External Examiner prefers to provide their report in hard copy it should be sent to *Mr. Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE.*

**PAYMENT OF FEES CANNOT BE AUTHORISED UNTIL RECEIPT OF THIS COMPLETED FORM
AND THE ASSOCIATED CLAIM FORM**

Name of External Examiner: Lorens Holm

Institution: University of Dundee

Programme of study and subject(s) examined: Architecture: M.Arch. Dissertations

Academic Year/Session to which this report applies: 2015/2016

Freedom of Information Act

The University is a public authority and therefore subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The University may therefore be required to publish the whole or parts of any reports and correspondence submitted by its External Examiners. The University also reserves the right to choose to publish the whole or parts of any reports submitted by its External Examiners.

SECTION A

1.1 Programme Structure

Comment upon the appropriateness of the structure and content of the programme in relation to its stated aims, learning outcomes and programme specification (if available).

The guides for the Dissertation Module and the Research Methods Module are succinctly and clearly written; the aims, objectives, content, and assessment standards are reflected in the students' dissertations. The dissertation is a very well-tutored and well-resourced program.

The structure and content of the dissertation program, including the teaching support and the allotted contact and student study hours, seems measured and realistic, and meets the learning outcomes set out in the module guide and the ARB criteria.

I am impressed by staff commitment and engagement with the students' work.

1.2 Comparability of Standards

Comment upon the comparability of the standards of the programme with similar programmes nationally and the performance of the students in relation to their peers on similar programmes. In those subject areas where a subject benchmark statement is available, have the students demonstrated achievement of the appropriate benchmark standard?

The Dissertation module compares favourably with similar modules at other schools of architecture of which I am aware, in terms of:

The content, length, and quality of the written work;

The benchmark standards for assessment and the parity of grading;

The structure and organisation of the module.

1.3 The Examination Process

Comment upon the appropriateness of the assessment methods and balance between them (i.e. unseen written papers, essays/dissertations, orals, etc), the marking scheme, procedure for the classification of the award and the overall conduct and fairness of the examination and assessment processes.

This is the only Dissertation of which I am aware that includes a *viva*. The *viva* is a terrific learning experience for the students. The assessment process by first reader and supervisor, which precedes the *viva*, is also a thorough and dignified process.

SECTION A (Continued)

1.4 How did procedures/arrangements compare this year with previous years? Have any or all of the recommendations made by you or your predecessor last year been actioned?

Similar.

1.5 If this is your first year as External Examiner please comment upon whether the school induction activities (if applicable), External Examiner Handbook and other documentation provided helped you to fulfil your role and responsibilities as an External Examiner. Are there any ways in which the process could be improved?

n/a

1.6 Please give examples, if appropriate, of good or noteworthy practice in the following areas which you wish to draw to the wider attention of the University:

- (i) alignment of learning outcomes with assessment tasks;

- (ii) methods of enhancing consistency of marking;
- (iii) explicitness of information relating to assessment;
- (iv) other practice in the structure, delivery and assessment of the programme.

(i) The Dissertation structure is similar to the grant application template (aims & objectives, questions, literature review, and the like). These are aligned with learning outcomes, provide the students with a clear structure and format, and make assessment easy.

(ii) Every dissertation is assessed 4 times: the tutor and reader assess it internally; it is then read – and then *vivaed* – by the external examiner.

(iii) As above, the module guide is explicit as to what is expected of a dissertation, how it is assessed, the learning outcomes, and the learning tasks.

(iv) overall, excellent.

1.7 If this is your final year as External Examiner please provide an overview of your period of office which may be passed on to your successor.

This is my 3rd year. I am available to exam a fourth time if the School would like that.

Last year, as luck would have it, I read only very high quality dissertations. This year, I got a more representative spread of grades, which gave me a more rounded view of the program.

All the topics chosen by the students were appropriate to the discipline of architecture and seemed to reflect the interests of the students. A thesis is a statement supported by an argument. I read the dissertations for two things: discrimination in the selection of evidence, and creative insight in how it is used. The weaker students seemed to use the grant application template (aims objectives questions methods literature review) as a grid of boxes which they stuffed indiscriminately, and I started to feel pummelled by information. The template provides a safety net. The stronger students were able to abandon the template and wrote searching and poignant papers.

The dissertation is currently taught independently of the final year M.Arch. design project. I wonder if consideration has been given to linking them, so that dissertation and design are in dialogue. This would probably involve tutoring the dissertation within the design studio. Given the timetable (the students begin the dissertation in the middle of 4th year), it would probably involve changes to how the course is organised. In the viva, I ask the students if they are able to bring the content, lessons, and practices of their dissertation into architecture, and into their own design practice in particular. The better students see the connections.

SECTION B

Please respond to the following questions by ticking the appropriate box. Please make appropriate comments if your answers are ‘No’.

Programme/Course Information		Yes	No	N/A
2.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the programme/course contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	X		

2.2 Comments

Examination Question Papers		Yes	No	N/A
2.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			X
2.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions satisfactory?			X
2.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			X
2.6	Were you afforded access to a sample of in-course assessments?			X

2.7 Comments
This section does not apply, as there were no exam papers *per se*.

Marking Examination Scripts		Yes	No	N/A
2.8	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?	X		
2.9	Were the methods of assessment well balanced and fair? Did they reflect the programme's objectives?	X		
2.10	Were examination/assessment procedures and the schemes for marking and classification correctly applied?	X		
2.11	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?	X		
2.12	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?	X		
2.13	Were satisfactory arrangements made for you to conduct any necessary <i>viva voce</i> examinations?	X		
2.14 Comments				
Each examiner assessed 13-14 dissertations, which is approximately ¼ of the class each, which is a sufficient sample to ensure that each examiner saw a representative sample of dissertation types, topics, and grades.				
I am pleased to note that the School has decided to continue with the practice of having the students submit hard copies of their dissertations, as opposed to digital ones. As I stated last year, I feel this is easier to read and it respects the artefactual nature of the publication.				

SECTION B (Continued)				
Coursework/Dissertations/Projects		Yes	No	N/A
2.15	Was the choice and assessment of coursework/dissertations/projects satisfactory?	X		
2.16	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	X		
2.17 Comments				
The students get written feedback from the internal exam process and a viva with the external.				
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)		Yes	No	N/A
2.18	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			X
2.19	Was the assessment of such work satisfactory?			X
2.20 Comments				
Examining Board Meeting		Yes	No	N/A
2.21	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	X		
2.22	Was the Examining Board conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures?	X		
2.23	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the programme?			X
2.24	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(s) of Study and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	X		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)		Yes	No	N/A
2.25	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board (i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees)?		X	
2.26	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			X
2.27	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			X
2.28 Comments				

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Clive Brown', written on a light-colored background.

Signed: _____

Date: 26/03/2016

Please return this report by email to: ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form, and any reports which cannot be emailed, should be sent to:
[Mr. Clive Brown, Registry Officer, Registry, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE.](#)